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Near East/South Asia Report

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POLITICAL SCIENTIST REVIEWS SOVIET GULF STRATEGY

London AL-BAHITH AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 11, Apr-Jun 87 pp 83-99

[Article by Dr Ahmad 'Abd-al-Razzaq Shakarah: "The Soviet Strategic Role in the Arab Gulf Region"]

[Text] In 1917, Russia was a poor, weak country to a large extent. The overwhelming majority of its population suffered from the phenomenon of widespread illiteracy (1). For a relatively long period, the Soviets absolutely did not acknowledge the label "superpower" (2). However, following World War Two, Stalin determined to form a "buffer zone" out of subordinate regions in the area of Eastern Europe. Therefore, the Soviets strove urgently to establish their own sphere of influence, benefiting from the results of the Yalta conference (3). Except for that, the Soviet strategic role continued to be relatively limited. This at least was what the Soviets themselves felt, in accordance with what they considered to be a political embargo imposed on them by the United States in the course of the cold war conflict between the West and the East. The situation continued in this manner for a period of 15 years, until diplomatic relations were established between them (4). For his part, Dr Henry Kissinger, the national security adviser in President Nixon's administration and former secretary of state as well, asserted clearly and frankly that for most of the period following World War Two, the Soviet Union was weak or not in a position which would allow it to defend itself in the face of an American nuclear first strike, and it could not basically improve its position through attack, since results unacceptable to the Soviet side would arise from a counterstrike on the part of the United States (5). However, in spite of a lack of proper clarity in long-range Soviet goals, a tendency appears to be relatively constant in the context of Soviet international strategy, the need to develop Soviet military capabilities, "resources," specifically nuclear ones. In application of this dictum, the Soviet nuclear arsenal grew and expanded greatly starting in the decade of the sixties and during the period of relative detente. Therefore, any nuclear confrontation between the two camps will be exorbitantly expensive in human and material terms.

The repeated holding of summit conferences in the decade of the seventies and the talk about the stage of nuclear parity or equivalency resulted in the spread of a general impression whose gist was that the world in whose

shelter we live is one of bilateral polarization in the framework of complex strategic weapons but one of proliferation in the political, economic and cultural context. In his statement on the extent of the seriousness and importance of the two superpowers' role in the world, Kissinger, in a press conference he gave on 25 October 1973, pointed out the following:

"We and the Soviet Union are at the same time adversaries and partners in peacekeeping" (6).

One can assert, then, that bilateral relations between the two superpowers receives greater attention than other relations beside these, whether in the context of the cold war or in the framework of the periods of relative detente. Therefore, also, the process of crisis management on the part of the two superpowers will endure, to avoid the outbreak of a third world war which will leave no survivors or traces. Nonetheless, we can observe the persistence of ideological enmity between the Western and Eastern camps, in addition to the fear on the part of each of the two axes of the intentions of the other which someone observing the developments of political events in the context of the ongoing international competition between them will notice.

In view of all the abovementioned, it is probable, or almost probable, that the number of areas located on the axis of "vital interests" between the two will be drawn into the sphere of international competition. What is of interest to us, of course, in a major sense, is the Arab Gulf region, which is of obvious geostrategic and, in terms of oil, economic importance. The questions we will try to answer will deal with the nature of this competition, the extent of equality of competition and the extent of its seriousness from the viewpoint of our study of the nature of the Soviet strategic role and its main goals in the Arab Gulf region as an integral part of the Middle East region.

The Arab Gulf has been known as an area vital to the interests of the West. What, however, about the degree of importance and seriousness of the Soviet strategic role in the region, especially with the persistence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan since 1979 -- indeed, more than that, the importance of the continuation and escalating severity of the Gulf war between Iraq and Iran, since questions have increased on the role of the superpowers and their position on this war, which has entered its sixth year (7)?

Soviet Goals, between Conception and Reality

In the past few years a number of conceptions and intellectual approaches have been set out by Western schools of thought which are earnestly trying to interpret the nature of the Soviet strategic role, its interests and major goals in the Middle East and Arab Gulf regions. Some of them may be steeped in conceptual theory, remote from reality, while others try as far as possible to derive inspiration from relative objectivity, taking into consideration the limited nature of the interpretations available, and also, as far as a number of considerations go, the lack of support for them by way of adequate argument or proof; indeed, some might seem to be contradictory. Anyone who tries to understand the nature of the Soviet strategy that has

been devised for the region must deal with the answer to two major questions:

A. Do Moscow's primary goals in the region have an "offensive" or "defensive" nature?

B. Are the Soviets indeed following a strategy drawn up in advance which includes the attainment of their goals and interests in the region, or is their policy the offspring of local circumstances, determined consequent to the Soviet Union's bilateral relations with each of the countries of the region? If a comprehensive strategy that has been drawn up in advance exists, what is the extent of its effect and effectiveness?

At the outset, it is worth stating that the presence of hopes, "aspirations," is something different from the possibility of realizing them, since politics is generally and persistently the art of the possible, not the art of that which it is desirable to achieve.

Robert Freedman has pointed out that we can break the schools of Western thought regarding this subject down into two main schools of proponents (8):

1. Soviet policy of a defensive nature.
2. Soviet policy of an offensive nature.

Before I describe these, it is worth stating that they both are agreed in viewing the Soviet Union as a major power and basic factor in the determination of Middle East affairs, for a logical reason, "geographic" proximity. However, on the other hand, the two schools differ in determining the Soviet Union's ultimate goal in the region (9).

1. The first school:

This school considers that Soviet policy in its basic nature is more defensive than offensive, essentially oriented toward preventing the region from being used as a base for military aggression or a suitable location for the devising of "destructive" policies against the Soviet Union. More than that, this school asserts that the Soviet Union's problems are so profound and serious that they force it to orient itself inwardly, on grounds that that is a temporary remedy for averting entrapment in the process of foreign intervention. The proponents of this school include the writer Jonathan Steele (10) and others who believe that military force, by its nature, is to be considered of limited effect and cannot be translated into general influence. More than that, the Soviets' strategic achievements in the context of the Arab Gulf region are limited by all standards. Therefore, the characteristic of the Soviet Union's strategic role is one of reaction more than initiative as far as the areas of the non-Communist world are concerned. To demonstrate the faint effectiveness of the Soviet strategic role, some observers and political analysts refer to certain cases of relative hesitation in the Soviet leadership's adoption of political decisions marked by decisiveness and appropriate influence in the framework of some intense regional crises or problems (such as the Middle East crises related to the Palestine

cause and their broad effects, including the severe Lebanese crisis following the extensive Zionist invasion of Lebanese territory in summer 1982 as well as the lack of direct Soviet intervention in the American-Libyan crisis, though the Libyan and Soviet parties had initialled a friendship and cooperation treaty in March 1983). In addition to the foregoing, some political analysts consider that attainment of a stage of relative parity or equality in the nuclear field between the two major axes, on the one hand, and the phenomenon of mutual dependence between the East and the West in the economic field specifically, constitute an incentive for a Soviet role marked by conservatism.

Therefore, acknowledgment of the Soviet Union's role as a great power, with the importance of asserting the need to support the foundations of the Soviet economy, constitute specific elements in Soviet foreign policy, and this, in turn, leads to an approach which is aimed at alleviating international tensions. Moreover, the weakness of the Soviet strategic role, as some researchers consider, might have unsatisfactory effects, since such a situation might constitute a latent threat facing the non-Communist world, developing regional crises and confrontations. The cause of this theory is fear of the absence of a balance of power, in whose framework the Soviet Union plays a major role as one of the two most important great powers in the world, especially in the field of military technology. On the other hand, we note that some statements point out that the state of Soviet weakness in general will provide a golden opportunity for the Western camp under the leadership of the United States, proceeding from a position of strength, to take a firm stand in its approaches, demanding concessions from an obdurate adversary in which some signs of weakness have started to become apparent.

2. The second school:

The goal of Soviet policy, according to this school's view, is to limit and ultimately eliminate Western influence in the region and if possible replace it with Soviet influence.

The question which is usually raised, but which it is extremely difficult to answer, is, does a comprehensive Russian-Soviet strategy exist which has been devised to extend Soviet hegemony to warm waters?

This sort of question is closely connected to the ambitions of the czars before 1917 and the Bolsheviks after them, following the events of October 1917, when the doctrine of extending Soviet influence from Bakir and Batum in the north and toward the Indian Ocean area in the south was propounded. Professor Malcolm Yapp points out that therefore this doctrine has shown that the Soviets, for numerous reasons, urgently strove to obtain a foothold in the Indian Ocean area (11). This doctrine derived its strength from two sources:

A. Conceptions connected to the historic context.

B. The requirements of the great powers (12).

On the basis of this analysis, Russia, and the Soviet state after it, was conceived of as an expansionist power which constantly strove to follow a

hostile policy designed to gain material dominance over the Arab Gulf region and the Indian Ocean area to the south. In accordance with this statement, the goal of the Soviets was to secure important maritime outlets in warm water ports, especially in the Mediterranean, Arab Gulf and Indian Ocean areas (13). What is known as Russian imperialist expansion was connected to the region geographically adjacent to the Soviet nation. In the framework of this approach, we can observe the incorporation of extensive areas of Asia into the framework of the Russian empire. Proceeding from that, the Soviet leaders determined to give numerous forms of proof to demonstrate their intense interest in the czarist-Soviet country's neighbors to the south (14) for security reasons (considerations of the Soviet Union's national security).

Nonetheless, one of the problems of the historic interpretation is that it lacks persuasive, valuable proof on the one hand, and, on the other, it tends toward generalities since it neglects to view the particular characteristics bearing on the Russian-Soviet intervention in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan (15). Thus, statements of this sort are partially founded on actual facts on the one hand and partially on conceptions which are remote from reality on the other. There is no doubt that the facts of Russian national security have received serious attention from Soviet politicians. In affirmation of this, Karl Nesselrod, the architect of Russian foreign policy, revealed the true nature of the Russian fear in confronting foreign threats in 1844 when he pointed out the following:

The fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire will attract the strong nations of Western Europe to Russia's southern boundaries (16).

Russia became connected to and to a large extent affected by the events and developments of a policy whose source was the Middle East -- a connection reaffirmed by the Crimean war in the period 1854-56, which was provoked because of a struggle between Orthodox Christians, who received support from Russia, and Catholics, who received support from France. The subject of the struggle revolved about the guardianship of the holy places in Palestine. Following its defeat in the Crimean War, Russia had to deal directly with Western European forces such as Britain and France. The same thing occurred when the San Stefano agreement signed in March 1878 by Russia and the Ottomans was revised in Berlin. After about 3 decades, Russia reached a temporary agreement for a modus vivendi with Britain in Iran, where the latter was divided into areas of influence, the northern area subject to Russian influence and the southern one looking out over the strategically important Arab Gulf subject to Britain, with the provision that what was known as the neutral zone divide the two (17). However, it is also worth noting that the historic interpretation has lost a significant part of its value, as Malcolm Yapp confirmed when he pointed out that in spite of the reference to a number of documents showing the extension of the line of Russian influence to warm water ports, the phrases cited in the testament of Peter the Great could be considered out of context, since the testament itself was forged (18). Yapp concludes his discussion by stating that adequate convincing evidence does not exist to prove that there was a czarist policy, drawn up in advance, whose goal was to strive to obtain a naval base in the Arab Gulf region or the Indian Ocean area, or that there was a desire to possess India

(19). Even if we consider the historic interpretation of the strategic Russian-Soviet role to be relatively compatible with the historic facts, this sort of interpretation is limited in its value unless actual documents are acquired, on the one hand, and, on the other, this interpretation lacks some effectiveness since it does not take into consideration in their totality the various circumstances in whose context the Soviet nation has had to act following the advent of the era of the atom (20). Nonetheless, such views as are presented might not be in agreement with the views of a number of political historians who have on numerous occasions asserted that the Russians and the Soviets have aspirations, "hopes," with respect to warm water areas.

Therefore the importance of reasserting that the existence of Soviet aspirations, "hopes," might not of necessity mean the possibility of carrying them out wholly or in part. In the light of this framework, the writer Freedman has observed that the political effects of the discussion bearing on the nature of Russian-Soviet defensive or offensive policy are to be considered a matter of obvious importance. If Moscow's orientation in the Middle East region were of a defensive nature, it would become not just possible but desirable for both the United States of America and the Soviet Union to act together in order to seek to realize settlements to the struggles or conflicts between the Arab countries and "Israel" and between Iraq and Iran in their ferocious war (21). Conversely, if Moscow's goals were offensive, it would become undesirable to draw Moscow into the peace process, and the reason behind that, according to Freedman's view, is the Soviet leaders' exploitation of the appropriate opportunities with the goal of weakening the position of the United States (22).

Soviet goals, interests and means (tactics) in the region, as the theoreticians of the two schools view them, are of an offensive nature and of a defensive nature:

Shahram Chubin and Robert Freedman (two strategic experts) have stressed that the nature of the foreign and strategic policy in the Middle East area is of an offensive nature, with the goal of creating a gradual transformation in the strategic environment in a manner opposed to Western interests. The proponents of this school are clearly concerned with the intensified efforts the Soviets are making to expand their sphere of influence. That, in the view of the theoreticians of this school, is done through the application of constant Soviet pressures, benefiting from appropriate opportunities which ultimately will lead to the creation of perceptible changes in the environment of the regional regimes and the subordinate regional regimes in a manner which will be in keeping with the desires and hopes of the Soviet nation. In confirmation of this, Freedman asserts that the Soviet Union in its competition with the United States appears to have been involved in a zero-sum game (23). Shahram Chubin says that it does not appear to be wise to suppose that the growth of Soviet military power (in the area of traditional arms or in the area of strategic parity) will not have its effect in challenging the Western camp in regional crises including those which occur in the Middle East in general or in the Arab Gulf region in particular (24). We might add, to the points of view of the theoreticians of the offensive school, the views of Edward Luttwak. Luttwak says, "When we debate the Soviet Union's entry into the era of what is called imperialist expansion, it

seems necessary that we prove that it has occupied one area of the world or another which will yield it some benefits which will make it possible for internal structural problems to be alleviated by it directly" (25). This sort of problem has shown that the Soviet Union is a country which is living in a state of profound disturbance: intense economic difficulties and the problem of succession with respect to the Soviet leadership (especially prior to the arrival of Gorbachev to the seat of power) in the light of the illness and death of a number of leaders of the Soviet Communist Party.

In addition to growing relative tension in some regional areas, in particular in the Islamic Central Asian republics, some statements have been made on the basis of this premise, such as "The style of the Soviet Union will be hostile in character in the framework of the general strategy the Soviets follow in a number of areas of the world" (26). From this the orientations which support the Soviets' desire to carry out a process of strangulation or total encirclement of the Arab Gulf region have emerged. In the framework of this sort of conception, Luttwak wonders about the way in which the Soviet Union will be able to benefit from its attempt to dominate the Arab Gulf oil region. Luttwak answers his questions in a concise fashion when he says, "Indeed, the Kremlin cannot put the attraction of winning adventures to the side, but it is wrong to present what the Soviets are doing as support for a claim which states that the Soviet Union has become a traditional military empire that is trying only to expand from the premise of internal structural weakness (27)."

Therefore, Luttwak lists a number of reasons and pretexts by which the Soviets justify their efforts at further expansion, which could include the following, in part or in whole (28):

Prompting a degree of national enthusiasm among people descended from Russian stock with the goal of obtaining their moral backing in support of the existing regime.

Developing the boundaries of the empire while creating a form of expansion which will encircle client or subordinate countries, if one may use the expression, all for the sake of strengthening the foundations of the Soviet nation so that it will be able to confront future crisis.

Decisive weakening of the basic adversary (for example the United States of America, China and so forth) so that that will enable it to realize a reduction in exorbitant military expenditures.

Inflicting defeat on a specific enemy which might be considered a threat to Soviet interests in the long run.

As a reaction to development of the Soviet strategic role internationally, the West placed the urgent effort to have the balance of power develop in its favor at the forefront of its priorities. In the Arab Gulf region, the Carter doctrine was issued in 1980 and the rapid deployment forces (RDF) were formed as a reflection of the acknowledgment that the military-political balance of power in the region would affect Western policy. He does not consider that a nuclear deterrent will present itself in a direct or

comprehensive manner since there are other balances of power in the regional context which might guarantee the need for the presence of a balance of power outside the region. In any event, the countervailing school, which claims that the Soviet strategic role is conservative in nature, continues to assert that the Soviet Union will not be reckless in character in the framework of international political relations, in light of the following considerations:

It is restricted by limitations and forms of power (military power to a lesser degree).

It is restricted to a greater degree in its foreign activity because of the complexities of conditions and circumstances and in view of the contradictions of regional politics.

The dynamic and growth of the national and religious spirit (especially the Islamic current) in the third world, where the character of opposition to communist proselytization stands out.

The world in whose context we are living is complex in its nature and one can portray it as one of relative relaxation and coexistence of limited scope in the framework of the state of ongoing competition between the Western and Eastern camps. Moreover, the course of national and regional policies brings up conditions the unfolding of whose events one cannot predict. The school which is defensive in character strives to adopt a Western policy model while acknowledging the limited nature of the effect and effectiveness of the use of military force as a solution one can rely on. Such a model emphasizes a perseverant attempt to create relations dominated by the spirit of conciliation and detente among regional countries, on grounds that that is the best means for realizing the vital goals and interests of the Soviet nation (29).

It is worth noting that the theoreticians of these two schools have competed to obtain the greatest possible support for their views from successive American administrations. That was clear in the era of the American president Carter's administration, which vacillated in proceeding to give preference to one over the other, since at that time great optimism over the United States' world strategic role and its effectiveness in the long range was apparent while, on the other hand, a sudden vacillation appeared in support for the use of military force, at times of crises specifically, in the relations between the United States of America and Iran following the fall of the regime of the Shah, the American administration's greatest ally, in 1978-79. In the American president Reagan's era, from our reading of the course of events, it appears that priority has been given to the views of the school which holds that the Soviet strategic role is of an offensive nature. The influence of the theoreticians of this school is still obvious up to now, especially in the context of the Soviets' strategic role in the third world region, notwithstanding the convening of the first summit conference between the American and Soviet leaders Reagan and Gorbachev. This situation may continue in this manner until the holding of the second summit conference between the leaders of the two strongest powers in the world in December 1986.

In addition, the increase in the number of political experts and analysts who see fit to adhere to the views of either school has become obvious. The adoption of the two tendencies together will lead to different results in Soviet foreign policy, with attendant repercussions upon the Soviet strategic role internationally and regionally, in the Middle East and Arab Gulf regions in particular. What, however, are the possibilities and limits of the Soviet strategic view regarding the Arab Gulf area? That is a question we will try to answer.

Light on the Resources of "Powers" and the Limits of "Relevant Restrictions"
-- The Strategic View of the Soviet Role in the Arab Gulf Region

Constants in Soviet strategy (and before that Czarist Russia) include Soviet concern for vital interests related to the subject of the Soviet nation's national security. In affirmation of that, the writer Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, in the course of discussing the importance and vital nature of the Arab Gulf, states the following:

"The Arab Gulf region is open to struggles but its problem in brief is that it contains economic interests that are vital to the West but its geographic proximity to the East makes the decisive settlement or total dominance of it something that is frightening to the Soviet Union as it was frightening to Czarist Russia. As a consequence it is open, in the sense that the West can obtain its economic interests through it, but it is not open in the sense of the Soviet Union's acceptance of Western military dominance of it or of the Middle East region in general (30)."

Within the framework of the nation's current competition with the United States of America over areas of influence, the Soviet Union's basic interests, in the geostrategic dimension, lie in the attempt to prevent or oppose the spread of American influence in the Middle East and Arab Gulf area (especially as far as strengthening the military presence goes). Therefore, Moscow showed its anxiety over the formation of what is called the unified central command USCENCOM, the new name for the American deterrent forces or what are known as the rapid deployment forces, RDF. Nonetheless, it is worth considering that Soviet strategy is cautious in that it acts realistically in evaluating major areas of influence. In this context, the writer Ahmad Hamrush points out the following:

"Soviet strategy assuredly is aimed at extending its influence to the Indian Ocean, but it has not taken uncalculated steps in this direction, since it has been content with the survival of Western influence in this wealthy region as long as that does not threaten its security and is in harmony with the Yalta agreements which followed World War Two. It also has access to oil" (31).

Soviet national security requirements have therefore been granted special priority by the Soviet leaders in the formation of Soviet foreign policy, and the Soviets have viewed the United States' strengthening of its positions of military influence in the surrounding oceans leading to the Arab Gulf (the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean) as an implicit danger threatening their security interests. In the context of the Arab Gulf,

Alexei Vasiliev, the deputy director of the African Institute in the Soviet Academy of Sciences, has considered that "the rapid deployment forces are only an American agency that is being formed to intervene in the affairs of the region and also exists for the purpose of confrontation with the Soviet Union" (32). In the same context, he viewed the continuous increase in the supply of American weapons to some countries in the region as itself perhaps constituting a growing threat to Soviet interests. From this viewpoint, as a reaction to the growth of Western military force, the Soviets have put their marine units in operation over broad areas remote from their countries' ports in the Black Sea, the Baltic and the Pacific (33). This sort of thing requires that they obtain outlets in the form of bases or marine facilities. These considerations explain in part the constant efforts to win over countries with geostrategic locations (such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, People's Democratic Yemen and Somalia, which was later replaced by Ethiopia) (34). In harmony with the foregoing, we can find a broad definition of Soviet security interests, specifically in what is known as the field of force of rapid military intervention. For this reason the Soviets have made efforts in the direction of supporting their political and even military presence in some areas which in terms of geographical dimensions might be considered tangential to the Arab Gulf but at the same time are of geostrategic importance (such as Ethiopia, Afghanistan and People's Democratic Yemen). Therefore, Moscow's close relations with Iraq and the Soviet military presence in People's Democratic Yemen and Ethiopia, in addition to their invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, have been portrayed as important, serious developments which have enabled the Soviets to expand the options and strategic means available with the objective of exerting a sort of pressure on the region (35). Some strategic experts and analysts have portrayed that as a firm Soviet plan to encircle the region and then attempt to tighten control over it. The West was particularly frightened, after the the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, of the Soviets' desire to spread Communist ideology in the non-Communist world. At this point, it is worthwhile for us to pause to answer the following question:

Does a comprehensive Soviet plan, prepared in advance, exist to control the Arab Gulf region?

In response we can say that while a number of political analysts have pointed out that Soviet military infiltration of Afghanistan was in effect part of a broad plan to surround the Arab Gulf which was aimed ultimately at tightening control over it for political, strategic and economic ("oil") purposes, we find other writers who consider that the Soviet infiltration is not part of a broad plan but can be viewed as individual cases in which the Soviets have benefited from the opportunities available, or have perhaps benefited from suitable local and regional circumstances, in the desire to expand their sphere of influence, since the Soviet Union is a superpower which has its extensive overseas interests (36). For his part, the political writer Mark Katz says that even if the Soviets' acts of infiltration were part of a major plan, its basic design has been hedged about by error, since the Soviets did not anticipate the degree of force of the resistance that was directed and is being directed against them in Afghanistan (the movement of the Mojahedin), Ethiopia (especially by the Eritrean liberation movement), and even Iraq, since, in spite of its strong relations with Moscow,

which culminated in the signing of the treaty of friendship and cooperation in April 1972, the latter has not relinquished its political positions, which have been characterized by independence in the context of settling domestic political affairs and conditions (specifically the government's relations with the Communist Party) and foreign policy affairs (37). It is worth noting that contrary to reports circulated in the West in the seventies, Iraq rejected Soviet offers that were presented with the acquisition of naval facilities in mind (38). Visits by Soviet vessels to Iraqi ports in the south, in particular the port of Umm Qasr, went on from the end of the sixties (the important period in the production and export of oil from the fields of the south -- Rumaila) until the mid-seventies. In 1975, the Iraqi government expressed its discouragement of such activities (39). It has appeared that Soviet influence in People's South Yemen is quite strong, but, in spite of that, the complexity of domestic and regional conditions has not allowed for attempts aimed at successfully spreading the revolutionary orientation or branching out from South Yemen to its neighbors (40).

In the framework of the official Soviet plan concerning the Arab Gulf region, we can describe the Soviet strategic position as cited in the Brezhnev initiative, which he presented in a speech he made before the Indian parliament in December 1980. Brezhnev recommended a plan which was considered an appeal for peace (especially since its appearance occurred following the outbreak of the Gulf war), consisting of five points in the form of mutual commitments, which were (41):

1. The failure to establish foreign bases in the Arab Gulf region and adjacent islands, and the failure to use (or send) nuclear weapons or other weapons of comprehensive destruction there.
2. The failure to use or threaten the use of force against the countries of the Arab Gulf region and non-intervention in their domestic affairs.
3. Respect for the stance of non-alignment which the countries of the Arab Gulf have chosen and the failure to draw them into military blocs in which the nuclear powers participate, because they are members of them.
4. Respect for the sovereign right of the countries of the region over their natural resources.
5. The failure to raise any obstacles or threats to normal (usual) trade and the guarantee of the use of marine routes linking the countries of the region to the other countries in the world.

It appears that Brezhnev's recommendations, when they were issued, were aimed at preventing the deterioration of the Soviet position in the strategic context, on the one hand, along with an attempt to improve the Soviet Union's image in the Arab Gulf region on the other. In addition, the Soviets used numerous means for guaranteeing their interests: agreements in the area of economy and trade, transit, joint energy planning, propaganda campaigns and so forth (42). However, the most important means the Soviets used for strengthening their areas of influence may have included the conclusion of long-term friendship and cooperation treaties with a number of countries

which were considered allies or friends of the Soviet nation, for instance, Egypt in 1971 (abrogated, however, in 1976), Iraq in April 1972, Somalia in 1974 (abrogated, however, in 1977), Ethiopia in 1978, Afghanistan in 1978, People's South Yemen in 1979, Syria in 1980 and Libya (initialled) in March 1983.

It is worth noting that the abrogation of some of these treaties, or the failure to carry them out properly in various circumstances or in permanent form, shows that this method and its degree of effectiveness are relative (43). More than that, the Soviets have faced serious problems in their effort to guarantee their vital interests or strengthen their positions of influence in the Middle East. These problems (restrictions) include the following (44):

1. The exacerbation and escalation of the severity of Arab or regional struggles which make the Soviet Union's position difficult or embarrassing, especially if it is partial to one party to the exclusion of the other. This leads to the alienation of the other party and indeed perhaps its alignment with the West.
2. In terms of optimal conditions, the emergence of governments or political leaders who follow Marxist ideology or are considered loyal to the Soviet Union is to be considered something which (if it is realized) will bring about the best of all possible political solutions for the Soviets (45). However, that might not be considered truly likely on the basis of a reading of historic events in the Middle East region, since the presence of Communist parties has proved to be an obstacle to the Soviet Union, as Communist activities or pursuits have created a severe deterioration in political relations between Moscow and central governments hostile to Communism (examples: the Sudan in 1971 and the Tudeh party in the context of the Iranian regime in being following the events of the Iranian revolution) (46). More than that, Communist ideology can in no case enjoy more than a negligible amount of popular support or acceptance in the Arab-Islamic countries of the Middle East.
3. The wealth flowing to the Arab world, especially to the oil-producing countries, from oil revenues after oil prices had increased fourfold over their 1973 levels prompted Arab political leaders to orient themselves toward the purchase of Western and Japanese technology. The justification presented was that the technology of the West and Japan is considered superior to that of the Soviets. In any event this situation led to a weakening of the bonds of economic relations between the Soviet Union and some Arab countries.
4. The escalation of the course of the Islamic tide and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which constituted an implicit threat to vital Soviet interests, especially in the southern border areas, the Islamic republics of Central Asia (47).
5. The limited nature of the influence of Soviet Middle East diplomacy (in the context of the Arab-Israeli struggle), especially after the October 1973 war. The limitations on the Soviet strategic role in the region increased

following the Camp David agreements of 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli agreements of 1979. All this enabled the United States to play the major diplomatic role in the context of the Middle East crisis, regardless of the results of this sort of role, which on a number of occasions were marked by negativism. A number of political and strategic experts, including Robert Eliot (of the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London), have for this reason pointed out that the errors of American foreign policy have been reflected in the form of gains for the Soviets' "interests" (48), but that is not at all true, especially with the restrictions or problems facing the Soviet strategic role in the Middle East region which we have referred to above. The Soviets' failure (up to the decade of the seventies, approximately) to realize fundamental political progress in the Arab Gulf region has not prevented the West from raising exaggerated questions regarding what has been considered or portrayed as a Soviet threat to the oil reserves in the Arab Gulf region, in view of the possibilities of the escalation of Soviet reliance on Gulf oil. To describe this point in its overall dimensions, we can say that a report was issued by the American intelligence agency CIA in April 1977 stressing that the Soviet nation's oil reserves had dropped substantially, as a result of which the report conveyed the picture that the Soviet Union with the advent of 1985 would shift from an oil-exporting country to an oil importing and consuming country to a massive degree. It pointed out that in order to compensate for the drop, Moscow and the countries of Eastern Europe would in the mid-eighties be compelled to import between 3.5 and 4.5 million barrels a day (49). This sort of study and others enhanced expectations which maintained that in order for the Soviet Union to obtain the oil it would need, it would try to control the rich oil fields in the Arab Gulf region. In repudiation of these claims, studies appeared which said that the Soviet Union would be able to produce adequate quantities of oil to meet its needs and thus would not need to import massive quantities of oil. In a subsequent study by David Wilson, this writer found that the American intelligence agency had reduced the effect of the Soviet Union's ability to substitute natural gas for oil. In addition to that, Wilson predicted that while Soviet oil production would increase slowly in the eighties, oil consumption would also continue to escalate slowly. The main effect of this would be a reduction in the volumes of Soviet oil exported, not pressure on Moscow to import oil (50). It is also worth stating that the American intelligence agency itself in 1980 reassessed its calculations, since it was proved that the previous estimates had not been accurate, as they had reduced the level of actual oil production about 1.1 million barrels a day. In spite of that, the agency continued to insist that the Soviet Union would become an importing country when its needs for oil energy grew (51) and when the rates of oil consumption in Eastern Europe increased, since the Soviet Union, by virtue of COMECON agreements, supplies its allies with their quotas of oil and natural gas.

It appears, in spite of that, that optimistic predictions concerning the state of Soviet oil are more accurate. In 1983, the Soviet Union did not import oil; rather, to the contrary, it exported 3.6 million barrels of it per day (52). In this regard, it is certain that the Soviet Union is the greatest of oil producers, since its output in 1983 came to 12.5 million barrels a day while its oil consumption totalled 9.1 million barrels a day. In addition to that, Soviet oil reserves come to 60 to 80 billion barrels

(about 9 percent of total world oil reserves). Natural gas reserves came to more than 1.2 trillion cubic feet [sic] (accounting for 41 percent of total world natural gas reserves) (53).

In spite of new oil discoveries from oilfields in Siberia, the Soviet Union has faced natural and technical problems of the utmost complexity and difficulty in carrying out operations of producing its oil and natural gas resources. The export of some of the oil which is in excess of requirements to the countries of Eastern Europe is an adjunct of the intensification of political and economic hegemony over its allies. The export of oil and natural gas to Western Europe has the purpose of obtaining the hard currency needed to support the Soviet economy.

Whatever the considerations from which the studies and trends that advocate the likelihood that the Soviets will resort to military means with the objective of guaranteeing oil interests from the Arab Gulf region have proceeded, it appears that the occurrence of a Soviet attack or invasion is farfetched, for numerous reasons, one being that the Soviet Union does not have a pressing need for oil as long as it can meet its needs and the needs of its allies the countries of Eastern Europe in the short and long terms. The theory which holds that the Soviets want to control the oil of the Arab Gulf with the purpose of controlling its affairs, or that conditions might prompt them to seek to prevent it from reaching the West, continues to lack adequate proof to be valid. On the other hand, the writer Mark Katz points out that the absence of evidence does not, in turn, mean that a theory is invalid. Moreover, the Soviets themselves will not frankly admit their intentions (54). In any event, the Soviet military option, direct or indirect, is not considered a viable matter or one that can be carried out, in light of the following: logistical difficulties, the relatively great distance between the Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula, the difficulty of controlling Iran or subjugating it with the objective of infiltrating its territory in the direction of the Arab Gulf region, the possibility that a regional confrontation might occur between the countries of the region on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, and finally, which is very important, the implicit risks arising from the possibility that a more wide-scale struggle might break out in the form of a direct military confrontation with the United States. Consonant with the foregoing, the threat of direct Soviet military intervention has declined to a large extent "due to the desire not to cross the red line which could threaten peaceful coexistence and international detente and threaten world peace" (55). The Soviets therefore have taken the initiative of evaluating their foreign policy positions as far as the events of the Middle East-Arab Gulf region are concerned and this in turn has resulted in their use of a more realistic and moderate style in the framework of their dealings with the Arab countries in general. Therefore, the general impression which holds that the Soviet Union is trying to use diplomatic means to strengthen its positions in areas which are considered of special importance to the West is a valid one. In the light of this framework, the Soviet Union has succeeded in its effort which is aimed at extending relations of diplomatic intercourse from Kuwait to Oman to the United Arab Emirates and perhaps also to other Arab Gulf countries. For their part, these countries have been anxious to establish balanced relations based on mutual respect for common interests among

themselves without ignoring the rights of sovereignty and proceeding from the premises of realpolitik.

With the escalation of the severity of the Gulf war, the negative results that might involve with respect to the regional balance of power and the dangers of a confrontation between the two superpowers, if their national security is subject to danger, the official Soviet position assumed concrete form in the direction the 26th conference of the Soviet Communist Party declared (56).

One of the things this position called for was the creation of a political solution to the Afghan problem in connection with the issue of Arab Gulf security. The Soviet Union has also decided to use quiet diplomacy through its proposal to "reduce the threat of war by concluding an international agreement" (57).

The declared Soviet position, which calls for resolution of problems and crises by peaceful means, was reiterated in subsequent conferences of Communist parties, including the 27th conference. However, it is worth noting that the Soviet position, with the continuation and the escalating severity of the Gulf war, has started to become compatible at least with the American position as far as acceptance of the following three goals is concerned:

First, in the first place, they have insisted on not being drawn into a direct military confrontation involving both of them. Second, their diplomatic and military approaches have been directed toward confining the struggle to local limits, in the sense of not permitting it to spread to such other regions as the lower Gulf, where important Western interests have established themselves, or to the heart of Iranian territory in the primary stages, lest Iran itself be exposed to the danger of fragmentation. Third, as an extension of the second consideration, they have avoided all measures which will have the effect of having either of the two parties win a total victory over the other (58).

Nonetheless, we cannot predict that stability will prevail in the two superpowers' positions and orientations or that they will continue to concur over common general goals, especially if their security or that of their allies is exposed to danger, on the one hand, and, on the other, their positions rely to a large degree on the continued preservation of their vital interests, or the development of these through specific regional balances of power in the Middle East-Arab Gulf region. More than that, the two superpowers' positions and roles regarding the Gulf war depend on a number of facts and circumstances, including the positions of the two countries concerned, Iraq and Iran, and, in addition to that, the serious developments and occurrences in the Arab-Israeli conflict, specifically the Palestine cause (the essence of the Middle East crisis) and the other crises connected to it, such as the Lebanese crisis, for example. A final statement it would be worthwhile for us to mention is that in the light of the declaration of the Carter doctrine in 1980 and after that what is known as the Reagan strategy of direct military intervention (59) in the affairs of the region, through support for the role of the rapid deployment forces RDF, in protection of the interests of the Western camp (the United States and its allies) it appears that the

Soviet threat to the region, the invasion of Afghanistan notwithstanding, is the least of the possible dangers. This statement is reaffirmed if we take stock of the negative, serious effects of American policies in alliance with the Zionist enemy in the Middle East area in accordance with what has officially been known as the strategic alliance between them, whose broad outlines were approved in 1983.

[Footnotes]

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(6) Denzil Peiris, "Moscow's Invasion Complex," South, November, 1984, p 14.

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- (31) Ahmad Hamrush, *The Gulf War and the Great Powers*, op. cit., p 12.
- (32) Judith Perera, "Riding the Bear," *The Middle East*, 1984, p 16.
- (33) O. M. Smolansky, op. cit., p 462.
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- (41) Steele, J., op. cit., p 203. Also see Ahmad Hamrush, op. cit., p 16.
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- (50) Katz, M. N., op cit., p 6.
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- (53) Ibid.
- (54) Ibid, p. 7.
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HISTORIC, STRATEGIC NATURE OF SUEZ CANAL REVIEWED

London AL-BAHITH AL-'ARABI in Arabic No 11, Apr-Jun 87 pp 100-106

[Article by Dr Yahya 'Abd-al-Mutajalli: "The Suez Canal: Egypt's Geographic Jugular and Strategic Bottleneck"]

[Text] The Suez Canal, Egypt's strategic jugular, has been subjected to various political and military struggles beginning with the British invasion which took place in order that the canal might be occupied by means of the occupation of the motherland Egypt in 1882 and proceeding through the Turkish invasion in World War One, the axis air attacks during World War Two and the oppressive tripartite aggression of 1956 to the bloodthirsty Zionist invasion of June 1967.

The Suez Canal, the lifeline of international communications and the bottleneck of the international shipping system, has been a target of many strategic political and tactical economic threats.

Many people wonder, "Is the Suez Canal really Egypt's geographic jugular and strategic bottleneck?" I consider that I should deal with the subject from the three following angles:

First, Egypt and the canal.

Second, the Arab Gulf and the canal.

Third and last, the Strait of Hormoz and the canal.

Egypt and the Canal

In the colonial era, which lasted approximately until the middle of this century, the general picture of the canal was so simple and clear, strategically, as to be sorrowful in the domestic and national contexts.

It was the connecting link between the East and West, between Asia and Europe, between the Far East and Western Europe and most of all between India and Britain. The canal was the lifeline of the British empire, India's artery and Britain's jugular. The British occupation forces, which fought

ferociously to remain in the Nile Valley in spite of the heroic national resistance, made their appearance for this reason. They then withdrew under nationalist pressure into the Canal area, where they continued to retain the greatest overseas military base in the world.

It was said, therefore, that Egypt belonged to the canal, rather than that the canal belonged to Egypt. The canal without a doubt rejuvenated Egypt's geographic status, but it turned it into a gateway of carnage from the strategic standpoint. While it is wrong or misleading for us to say that the canal thus sinned against Egypt, or that our location sinned against our independence, it remains true, in spite of that, that the canal remained such a passageway and headquarters for colonialism that the allegation was constantly made in colonialist literature that a country in Egypt's situation could not be its own master and that since its canal was built it could only belong to the civilized world.

Renan* expressed this colonialist philosophy when he said, "Land which is so much of interest to the rest of the world cannot be master of itself."

We see Juillet describing this claim as an outmoded theory, then proceeding to wonder if it is possible for us to distinguish from the economic standpoint between riparian Egypt and its port Alexandria, and the Egypt of the canal, which is separate from Nilotic Egypt. It appears that some people viewed the canal as a marginal region tangential to Egypt, that is, just a foreign or Egyptian passageway which was set aside for foreigners and whose connection to the motherland of Egypt was slight. Others considered that the contradiction between the interests of location and the interests of status in Egypt was an inevitable necessity, however unfortunate. However, it is completely clear that such a contradiction arises only from arrogant colonialist thinking. From the national standpoint, there is no contradiction whatsoever. Location and status are each an integral part of Egypt, and together they are two limbs of the national political body.

Just as the canal was taken as a justification and pretext for the occupation of Egypt and the lengthy sojourn there, it was also the instrument for repressing the overseas colonies east of Suez. Here we wonder, who sinned against whom? Did the canal sin against the Orient or the Orient against Egypt? The fact is that both were a common victim of a single element, colonialism.

While the canal, against its will, facilitated old colonialism's task in the Orient, it specifically by itself gave the Orient back its freedom and standing later. The Suez war of 1956, which put an end to imperialism and the era of colonialism and empire forever, occurred on the banks of the canal in order that that would be restored, and the wave of independence opened up throughout the whole third world. Thus the canal came as the final and most grievous end of old colonialism, as it had been one of its most prominent beginnings; it began as a beginning and entree for colonialism and became its grave.

*Ernest Renan (1822-1892), the famous French historian and philosopher, wrote many works on Judaism and Christianity from the social and political standpoint and possessed an elegant literary style.

The canal wrought vengeance for itself and its victims, repaid the debt and gave glory, dignity and independence back to the nation of Egypt.

The Arab Gulf and the Suez Canal

With the beginning of the second half of the century a new stage came, bringing four radical changes which however were contradictory and conflicting in their effects. These factors were the revolution of national liberation and the liquidation of old colonialism, Arab oil wealth, the beginning of the nuclear era and the establishment of Israel alongside the canal.

At this point, as colonialism was expelled from Egypt and the Arab world as it was expelled from the third world and the tropics, the canal became more of a connecting link between Western Europe and the Middle East than between Britain and the Far East. Moreover, with the oil explosion in the Arab East in particular, and the Middle East in general, the canal was transformed from an artery of empire, as it had been, to an "artery of oil." As the Arab Gulf had become the oil gulf, so did the Suez Canal become the oil canal, and consequently the canal truly became the jugular of Western Europe, which lives on oil, the oil of the Middle East.

On the other hand, the canal's role at this point became dependent on the activity of the Arab Gulf, and consequently its dependence on the Gulf started to increase further. Whereas the Gulf had been subordinate to the canal in more than one respect, the opposite became the case to one degree or another.

The fact is that this to some extent reflects the serious strategic revolution which oil had caused within the Arab world. In spite of the overall strategic value of the canal, it was oil in itself, as a vital strategic commodity, that came to give the Gulf unlimited strategic value. This meant that the strategic value of the resources and wealth of the location had greatly exceeded the traditional value and gains of the location. As a result, it was feared that the strategic center of gravity had started to shift and progress, slowly but surely, from the canal to the Gulf. Perhaps the shift of the spotlight of the superpowers' struggle and designs at present to the Gulf is the most obvious sign of this shift.

More explicitly, the shift of strategic importance from the canal to the Gulf is summarized, most simply, in this hard fact: "The canal was a route to India and it now is a route to the Gulf." In the former situation, the Gulf was a point on the route to Suez, but in the latter one Suez has become a point on the route to the Gulf, indeed, perhaps worse than that, while the canal in the former situation had been the entire route to India, in the latter situation it has become half the route to the Gulf.

Unfortunately the canal has lost at least half its strategic value to the Gulf, just as it has unfortunately lost more than half its economic value. While it has been exaggeration and hyperbole for some people to compare the importance of the Suez Canal relative to the Gulf in the new equation to the importance of Cyprus relative to the Suez Canal itself in the past, there is no doubt that a process of strategical diminution of the value and weight of the canal since the sudden oil revolution has objectively occurred.

What then, now that the Arab Gulf has become a center of international struggle in the region, while the canal and Egypt have become a center of local struggle between the Arabs and Israel, whereas the opposite was the case — the canal was the spotlight of the world struggle in the region and the Gulf the site of a process of local, peripheral side struggle? There is no room for doubt that oil has affected the distribution and order of strategic and political values, weights and roles in the region in a manner which one cannot ignore.

While these have been the most prominent results and effects of the two elements of the revolution of national liberation and Arab oil wealth on the canal, the opposite effects have occurred in the case of the two other modern elements, the nuclear age and the implantation of Israel. The decline of the colonial system and the liberation of the colonies reduced the canal's military value to British colonialism, especially, and to the forces of maritime colonialism in general, but the decisive element which jolted the strategy of the canal has no doubt been the emergence of the new nuclear space strategy which has fundamentally and essentially jolted the concept of geographical location.

This nuclear strategy has shortened the factor of distance, eliminated place many times over and consequently reduced much of the element of geographic location in its old sense and to some extent reduced the value of the canal in world strategy, especially in military naval strategy. As it is said, battleships, the offspring of the mid-19th century and the mistress of the seas at that time, doubled the strategic value of the canal, while nuclear missiles arose as the offspring of the mid-20th century and the mistress of space at this point, and deprived the canal of some of its old, traditional strategic value.

Nonetheless, it is wrong for us to imagine that the old geographic strategy of location has totally disappeared, especially since some things have occurred with respect to nuclear strategy which have restricted it from the practical standpoint. The nuclear balance of terror has neutralized its total effectiveness and put the whole world nuclear arsenal in "mothballs," so that it has turned into a "dormant volcano," and classical strategy, with its old traditional elements in the form of geographic locations, military bases and waterways, has come back once again to occupy the central position in actual fact.

At this point the canal has come back once again to constitute the center of gravity of strategy, and naval strategy specifically. Nothing offers greater proof of the renewed maximum strategic value of the Mediterranean and also the Indian Ocean, and consequently the Red Sea between them, in the two superpowers' struggle for naval sovereignty. The stage of the sixties and the seventies, when for the first time the Soviet Union emerged into the world's seas on a massive scale, paralleling the American Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean with an equal competing Soviet fleet, especially in the 1967 war, attests to that.

In this decisive strategic framework, we can understand the exceptional implicit importance the blocked canal had at that time and the implicit danger

that loomed over the world were it to be reopened. That continued to assert the restored, magnified, implicit and future strategic value of the canal in naval strategy even in the post-nuclear world.

Making a simplified study of the natural and political map of the world and following the world's naval backbone — the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, the backbone of maritime power — what if the canal were closed? The backbone would be broken and shattered and its sections, in spite of their enormous size, would turn into mere blind alleys (the Red Sea and Mediterranean), while the fleets would automatically be divided into two totally separate archipelagos with no link between themselves except the passage around the cape, that is, a whole circle around an entire continent. That means that closing the canal would metaphorically turn the African continent once again into the "peninsula" it had been before the canal was built and opening the canal would turn the continent into an "island" detached from the land mass of the old world. This precisely is the configuration of the current situation and it is also the key to the hidden struggle which went on between the two superpowers concerning the reopening of the canal.

It is well known that the United States, since it adheres mostly to Western Hemisphere strategy and dominates the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, did not find a pressing or urgent interest in the reopening of the canal, totally the opposite of the Soviet Union, in whose expanded naval strategy the canal is dominant. The former has a consummated, unstated interest in keeping the canal closed in order to deprive the latter of the freedom of movement and consolidation of its fleets in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean and consequently intensively increasing its presence in the latter and its entire basin and along the coasts of east Africa and south Asia, with all the threats and confrontation in proximity to the world oil basin in the Arab Gulf and along the oil headed westward which that has entailed — constantly weakening the desire of the United States of America to hasten the reopening of the canal and magnifying its interests in postponing it, on the one hand, because the Soviet fleet's vessels are smaller in size, lower in tonnage and better able to transit the canal, contrary to the massive American vessels, not all the units of which, especially the giant aircraft carriers, can go through it. On the other hand, the position of the Soviet fleet along the oil route is stronger and more dominant, in view of the relations the Soviet Union has in Red Sea and Indian Ocean ports. All these considerations had their strategic dimensions which it would not be possible to ignore following the opening of the canal.

Of the elements of the struggle, we are left with the fourth and final one, and that is the implantation of Israel in the Arab nation. It has been proved historically that the establishment of Israel under the aegis of the old colonialism had from the outset a specific, calculated connection with the canal in particular, and consequently with oil with the beginning of the fifties, whereby Israel would, in their words, be the watchdog in the region, making it safe for colonialism once colonialism departed. Israel performed the role that had been drawn up for it first of all in 1956, when the canal was a target and theater, and that led to its shutdown for more than a year for the first time since World War Two.

After this, it played its greater role, on its own, in the June 1967 war, which shut the canal down for the second time in approximately a single decade, for a period of 8 consecutive years. That is to say, the canal, by Israel's action, was shut down twice for more than 9 years in the course of approximately 27 years, that is, roughly a third of the entire time since Israel was created, and this is a phenomenon the canal had not experienced for a whole century since it was built. This without the least reservation means that Israel is the greatest threat the canal has witnessed.

Israel, with vengeful insolence, tried directly after June to make regional claims on its behalf on grounds of the right of conquest or triumph to take over half the length of the canal. When the heroic Egyptian artillery inundated this evil attempt in its waters, it ceaselessly repeated its insolent offers to take part with Egypt in opening the canal and operating it on a basis of equally sharing the revenues from it. In addition to that, Israel also took advantage of the setback to realize its old plans and projects which had been set out for assuming the role of the canal for good. It is well known that Israel always aimed at stealing Egypt's geographic location and dreamt of taking the transit route over and arrogating it to itself. Previously, it had set out a plan for an alternative canal (the Zion Canal) between the Gulf of al-'Aqabah and the Mediterranean, to compete with the Suez Canal and share its geographic function with it, but this fantastic project, which merely arose from the grip of a psychotic imagination and touchy vindictiveness, ended up logically in the wastebasket of history, indeed in its graveyard. It was contrary to all the facts of science and nature, geography, uneven terrain, economics, politics and indeed history and logic.

By the way, we should point out that this was not the first time an enemy of Egypt's in the region had thought of a competitive alternative to its canal. Many people might not realize that the British occupation forces, after they had settled in Egypt, presented DeLesseps in the latter part of the century with the threat of excavating a second canal alongside Suez, in order to put pressure on the French management of the company and force it to submit to their control. However, the project was a struggle that ended in failure, as the Zionist project ended later; neither of them in reality amounted to more than a piece of wishful thinking and psychological warfare.

At this point, we must pause briefly to ask what the comprehensive, historic, geostrategic significance of the Israeli threat to Egypt's canal is. The only answer is that it is a repetition of the crusader threat, in all its conclusions, ramifications and concomitant circumstances, alongside the Portuguese threat embodied in the Arab East at that time, which joined forces with the Western enemy and its colonial designs to divert the historic trade between the East and West, the trade of spices, condiments, silk and gems, from the region to the cape. Thus a major act of arrogation of transportation took place which put an end to the transit trade and intercession.

The region was stripped of its tremendous material gains, and the Mediterranean, with its coasts — a dominant beehive of commercial activity in the middle ages — turned into a mere stagnant, moribund lake, with its ports, from Alexandria to Beirut and from Genoa to Venice and the other Italian

ports, not to speak of all the ports of the Red Sea. Conversely, shipping and strategic activity, under Portugal's aegis, shifted to the Indian Ocean, the Arab Gulf and the Strait of Hormos.

This is what happened in the recent past, when the East-West trade shifted to the cape route, the movement of oil, the new spices of the East and the condiments of the 20th century, shifted correspondingly, the Mediterranean was turned into a severed arm and all its ports lost a major share of their activity and movement and were sometimes subjected to unemployment and sometimes to material losses. Once again, Egypt, the Levant and Italy were harmed the most.

In order for the discussion to be complete and the simile to be rounded out, as the Indian Ocean inherited the role and activity of the Mediterranean in the days of Portugal, here the naval struggle and the fleets of the super-powers are moving over to the Indian Ocean, while the center of gravity, strategic importance and economic center has shifted from the sphere of the Suez Canal to the sphere of the Arab Gulf. While the strategists of the past, from Napoleon to the English, considered Egypt and its canal the most important strategic location in the world, we have now started to hear people considering the Gulf the most important and serious focus of strategy in the world. The Americans, specifically, have now just started reiterating that whoever controls the Arab Gulf will control the world.

One can state, in summary, that the Indian Ocean (a half-ocean), which in its geographic form and development resembles the Mediterranean, and has sometimes been described as the Mediterranean of Asia-Africa, is now itself on the verge of becoming the new Mediterranean in a world without Suez, while the Red Sea, the long deep trench, is turning into a mere blind alley and activity has come to a halt in its harbors, from al-Qusayr and Port Sudan to Jiddah, al-Hudaydah and Suez at its head in the north, and Aden where it originates in the south, where the situation in the recent instance has reached the point where the port is bankrupt and the bankruptcy in the port has reached the point of bankrupting the country.

More than that, even in the context of fine points and detail, the negative aspects of the past, when crusader threats along the caravan, pilgrimage and transportation routes situated in the north of Egypt imposed the need to look for another safe alternate route, are being repeated. For that reason, this route was transferred to the one between Upper Egypt and the Red Sea, which lay far down the valley, remote from the crusader threat. Similarly, we ourselves recently and temporarily were compelled to draw up a truck transportation route between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean or al-Qusayr-Alexandria, passing through the valley in Upper Egypt. Indeed, more than that, the Suez-Mediterranean oil pipeline project, Sumed, which is remote from the canal, since the direct Israeli threat to the hinterland was more secure, has just been another version of the old shifting "overland route" from the north to the south.

It is clear, therefore, that the historic-geographic analogy between medieval crusader and modern Zionist geostrategies is almost complete, up to the details, indeed to a surprising degree. Indeed, more, the Israeli threat

alone has done to us, our canal, our position and the old world pursuant to that what the two crusader and Portuguese threats combined did in the past, the Israeli occupation of Sinai has led to the paralysis of the canal and the paralysis of the canal has led directly to the suspension of Egypt's geographic position. How closely the night resembles the day!

The Strait of Hormoz and the Canal

Egypt and Iraq were always dominant international centers of political power in ancient times and the center of gravity shifted back and forth between them a number of times, one way and the other. A balance of power and political struggle and sensitive competition (between the route of Egypt, the Isthmus of Suez, and the route of Iraq and the Suez Canal) existed on many occasions on both sides or flanks of the Arabian Peninsula. In the middle ages, Abbasid Iraq was the basic center of gravity as a result of its many local, regional and continental developments. However, following the Mongol storm, the center soon shifted from Iraq to Egypt officially and for good, although the discovery of the cape route in turn soon moved the center from Egypt to Portugal, and thus the era of the Mediterranean ended with the era of the Atlantic Ocean, the route of Western Europe.

Then came the Suez Canal, which unquestionably restored their importance to the Mediterranean, Egypt and the Suez route. The Atlantic Ocean retained its status as a focal point of power and world dominance for the great empires (Britain and France).

This strategic matrix reached its zenith under the aegis of Britain in the 19th century. That was the era of Britain, or the era of coal, the railroad, the steamship, the Suez Canal, Egypt, old colonialism and the struggle of empire. In this matrix the Arab Gulf was just a point for a foothold along the arterial Suez route, the route of empire and the jugular of India. One can consider the period of World War Two up to the middle of the century the high point of this strategic matrix.

When the world shifted from the era of coal to the era of petroleum and consequently from the railroad and steamship to the car and the tanker, world sovereignty shifted from Britain, the island of the continent, to America, the continent and the island, the era of America came to take the place of Britain's era, the shift was decisively and definitively completed after the revolution of national liberation in the third world, the liquidation of empires, neocolonialism took the place of old colonialism, and the struggle of the two blocs took the place of the struggle of the old colonial empires.

The emergence of petroleum in the Middle East, especially in the Arab Gulf basin, which has become the prime reserve of oil deposits in the world, had [word missing]. The Gulf immediately became the most important strategic point of the most important strategic commodity in the modern world and consequently the focal point and spotlight of all the international policies, strategies and struggles of the West and the East combined, without exception.

Suez and the Gulf exchanged places, roles and relative importance. Whereas Suez had been great and the Gulf minor from the strategic standpoint, the

balance was turned around, the Gulf became very great and Suez relatively minor, the strategic center of gravity in the world shifted from the canal to the Gulf, the Gulf, in astronomical, totally fantastic figures, evolved into the richest area of the world in terms of income and capital, and simultaneously and at one moment it became the greatest oil and money bank, or, in other words, the most recent empire in the modern era.

Over a quarter century, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf basin turned into the greatest repository of energy in the world and the site of the bulk of its future reserves and deposits to 2000, at the least estimate, since this reserve comes to about two thirds the non-Communist world's total while production is no less than one-third total world production, and the whole West in addition to Japan and indeed the United States of America depend absolutely on it. Nineteen million barrels pass through the Strait of Hormoz, at a rate of one tanker every 8 minutes, every day, representing more than two thirds the Gulf's production, which comes to about 28 [sic] million barrels a day. It accounts for 90 percent of Japan's needs, more than half the needs of Western Europe and one quarter of the imports of the United States of America.

In contrast, the Suez Canal was the lifeline of just one empire, but the Gulf is the lifeline of the entire West, indeed the world. On the best of suppositions and cases, in more accurate terms, the Gulf is an Achilles heel, while the canal is just an outlet. It is not surprising that the Strait of Hormoz should become the Gulf's jugular and gateway, and the Suez Canal in effect the outlet and true passageway of the Gulf's oil. Together, they are the site and the passageway of the oil, existence and a route at the same time.

The inevitable result, whether we like it or not, obviously is that the Gulf today has become the focal point of the struggle in world strategy, especially between the two superpowers and the Western and Eastern blocs. All the competition is over it, all designs involve it and all light is upon it. The oil of the Gulf, as far as the West goes, is not just life, but it is also an Achilles heel, in the sense that any threat or deprivation of its supplies will mean its capitulation without a struggle in any traditional international war. It is half the battle and half the victory as far as the East goes. The Gulf is the flash point of a possible third world war and its gateway, Hormoz, is the beginning of it.

The Gulf has shifted the stage of the direct struggle automatically from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, and, perhaps recently, the Atlantic Ocean. While some people consider that the Arctic Ocean, not the Atlantic, is the world's new Mediterranean in the nuclear era and in nuclear strategy, the Indian Ocean is without a doubt the world's new Mediterranean in the era of petroleum and traditional strategy. The Indian Ocean, which is roughly half an ocean and in its form and general structure resembles the Mediterranean except that it is open to the south without shores and borders, has itself become the new Mediterranean in strategic policy, just as the Strait of Hormoz has become the new Suez Canal in the metaphorical sense.

In actuality a new strategic pattern of international struggles has emerged in the Eastern Hemisphere — the struggle between the two blocs and the two

giants, the United States and the Soviet Union, which is almost the contrary of the pattern of the old struggle in the colonial era, the era of Britain. The stage and the threat have moved to the east of the canal and the Mediterranean, and indeed to the east of Europe itself.

While Western Europe, since the end of World War Two, throughout the cold war then the thaw and finally detente, has in the relative sense tended toward peaceful coexistence, Asia has become the stage of the greatest and most serious local wars and national revolutions in the world, roughly, starting with the Korean War, then Vietnam, then the China-Indian war, then the series of wars of India and Pakistan, up to the secession of Bangladesh and the Iranian revolution, then the Iranian-Iraqi war and finally the invasion of Afghanistan — all this in addition to the Arab-Israeli wars in the west of the continent, not to mention the Soviet-Chinese struggle in the east of it.

While America has departed, more or less, from Asia, Soviet influence there has expanded further and become more widespread. In summary, one can state that the center of gravity of the heated fighting in the world has roughly shifted from Europe, where it was a tradition, to Asia, since the former has politically become more like an extinct volcano while the latter has truly been transformed into a live one.

This is the complex of international changes which have added to the value and strategic importance of the Arab Gulf area and the area east of it at the expense of the region of Suez and the canal. In summary, one can state that the geopolitical center of gravity and strategic attraction has shifted from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, from the Suez Canal to the Arab Gulf, from Egypt and the Levant to the eastern Arabian Peninsula and Arab east, and from the north of the Red Sea to the south of it, and, in brief, from the center of the Middle East to its east, or, in other words, from the Near East to the Middle East.

11887

CSO: 8104/3958

OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS CONDEMN GOVERNMENT 'REPRESSION'

NC150820 Paris AFP in English 0806 GMT 15 Apr 87

[Text] Tunis, April 15 (AFP)--Five Tunisian opposition movements have warned against "the resort to repressive practices" and demanded "guarantees" for political freedom of unions and student movements following a wave of arrests of Moslem fundamentalists in Tunisia since March.

The Movement of Social Democrats, the Communist Party, the Party of People's Unity as well as the Socialist Progressive Party and the Movement of People's Unity were reacting for the first time to the arrest of several dozen members of the unofficial Islamic Tendency Movement, accused of plotting with officials of the Iranian Embassy in Tunis to overthrow the government of President Habib Bourguiba.

Tunisia broke off diplomatic ties with Iran on March 26.

In a carefully-worded statement issued Tuesday, the parties avoided any direct mention of the fundamentalists that could be seen as an expression of support.

"Repression, arrests and political trials cannot in any way be a solution to the problems we are faced with," the statement said.

The parties said they "reject repressive practices, regardless of what movement is the victim, beyond ideological and political divergences," the statement said.

They demanded "the end of political trials, the release of political or union leaders imprisoned, the lift of measures affecting opposition and independent newspapers, the promulgation of a general amnesty law and the establishment of a national dialogue."

/8309

CSO: 4500/84

TUNISIA

OPPOSITION LEADER CHARGED, LATER RELEASED

NC181403 Paris AFP in English 1345 GMT 18 Apr 87

[Excerpt] Tunis, April 18 (AFP)—Tunisian opposition leader Ahmed Mestiri was released late on Friday after spending several hours in police detention, a spokesman for his party, the Social Democrat Movement (MDS), said here on Saturday.

Mr Mestiri has been charged with organising an unauthorised meeting of opposition parties, including two unauthorised parties, to protest against the arrest of Islamic fundamentalists in Tunisia, the spokesman said.

Neither the arrest nor the release of Mr Mestiri were confirmed by Tunisian authorities.

The MDS spokesman said that Mr Mestiri had received police summonses on Thursday and early Friday, but had refused to obey them because the nature of the charges against him was not clearly indicated.

Mr Mestiri, MDS general secretary, was then arrested at his home by two policemen and taken into custody, the spokesman said.

/8309

CSO: 4500/84

RETURNING PRISONERS OF WAR RECOUNT IRANIAN ATROCITIES

Baghdad AL-THAWRAH in Arabic 6 Apr 87 p 11

[Article by 'Abbas al-Hadidi: "Fighting Prisoners Returning to the Homeland: We Held Demonstrations in the Iranian Regime's Camps and Shouted the Name of Iraq and Its Commander"]

[Text] In the course of a press conference held in the Ministry of Culture and Information and attended by representatives of the local papers and correspondents of Arab and foreign agencies, a group of disabled fighting prisoners returning to the homeland exposed the torture, cruelty and inhuman practices which the oppressive Khomeyni clique and its henchmen have pursued against the Iraqi prisoners in the criminal Khomeyni's prisons.

The Iraqi prisoners returning to the homeland asserted that all their cases of physical disability were the result of the techniques of brutal torture carried out against them by Khomeyni's dishonest henchmen through their direct supervision under various pretexts of which lofty values, custom, international documents and the Geneva agreement on the treatment of war prisoners disapprove.

A number of returning prisoners, in their discussions, pointed out that Iran's executioners, in spite of their protestations of adherence to Islam, which has no connection with them, accuse us of apostasy and atheism, forgetting that we are the grandchildren of those great men to whom almighty glorious God gave his divine tolerant message and whose banner they carried to the settled regions in order to deliver the peoples of the earth from ignorance, cause the truth to reign and combat tyranny.

At the beginning of the interviews with the Iraqi prisoners returning to the beloved homeland, Mr Shakir Jasim Subayh revealed the methods of brutal torture that have been carried out against the Iraqi prisoners without exception, stating, "After I was taken prisoner on 27 March 1982 in the al-Shush sector, our clothes, money and wristwatches were stripped off us and we were left only with underclothes. We were packed into small shacks for a number of days, in which food and water were not given us and our bleeding wounds were not bandaged up. After that, we moved to Camp No 11 and they carried out the vilest forms of physical and mental torture against us, such as

beatings by cables and clubs, kickings and the group punishment of crawling over rough ground and hot sand in the summer or ice in the winter.

They Broke My Back

"After some months, I was moved to the Kariz camp in Tehran, where someone called Sheykh 'Abdallah, who claims that he is the imam's representative and speaks Arabic, supervised our torture. This vile person tried to compel us to support the swindler Khomeyni and attack our historic leadership. However, all his attempts were met with rejection. In the face of that, more brutal practices were carried out against us. My back was broken by the vile Sheykh 'Abdallah, after I was thrown on the ground and he kicked my backbone with his feet."

20 Days without Sleep

"[Line missing] 19 in the al-Muhammarah sector we were led to the Gorgan camp and they carried out group tortures on us in the form of crawling on the ground for a period of a week, from morning till afternoon, without offering us water or food. As a result of this inhumane practice, we held a demonstration in which all the prisoners took part. We shouted the name of Iraq and its leader, which led to the detention of 170 prisoners in a small room no more than 3 meters long and 2 meters wide. They engaged in methods of cruelty and torture, bandaging our eyes, hitting us with cables and using electric shocks in the middle of the night. After that, they took us to an area where there were pools of freezing water and put us in them until morning, then packed us into individual cells half a square meter in area in which there was barbed wire. I remained in this situation for a period of 20 days without sleep.

"During the visit by the International Red Cross to the camp, a number of Iranian civilians from intelligence infiltrated into our ranks as prisoners and prevented us from talking to the delegation and exposing the injustice, vindictiveness and cruelty we were suffering from. However, we held a protest demonstration against their methods, which prompted them to open fire with their weapons on us and a number of persons fell as martyrs and wounded persons. After that I was moved to another detention camp."

They Buried Us in the Snow

Mr 'Abd-al-Latif 'Abd-al-Zahrah, born in 1952, said, "I was taken prisoner on 24 May 1982 in the al-Muhammarah sector. After that, I was moved to the Arak camp and the vilest forms of torture were carried out on us by Khomeyni's heretic henchmen and aides, who buried prisoners in snow up to their necks and beat them with sticks and cables. They then would be taken out of the hole and hung by their feet all night long, after which they would be forced to eat human excrement. Methods of group punishment were carried out in the form of crawling over snow in the winter season or crawling over burning sand in the summer season, when we were naked except for under-clothes.

"After the pursuit of these methods, they put us in sanitation facilities and poured cold water on us throughout the hours of the day, in addition to

excruciating beatings on the head, chest, stomach, back and other places. I broke my hand as a result of the torture."

Mr Karim Jabbar, born in 1945, said, "I was taken prisoner on 24 May 1982 in the al-Muhammarah sector and in the prison camps the dishonest persons subjected us to arbitrary forms of compulsion such as signing in blood to support the senile Khomeyni, imposing group punishment and forcing the prisoners to write out written support for the regime, attack Iraq and its leadership and talk about our women in an unworthy manner, as well as practices of beating by electric rods, abuse and attempts at debasement. The martyrdom of more than 75 Iraqi prisoners resulted from the inhumane practices of torture and medical treatment was denied the prisoners who suffered from their pains and wounds."

Mr 'Aziz Salih 'Utaywi, born in 1947, said, "After I was taken prisoner in the al-Muhammarah sector, our clothes and everything we owned were taken away and we were left in underclothes. After a week of being packed in small shacks, I was moved to the Gorgan camp, where they crammed more than 150 prisoners in each small room without offering us any food except for a piece of dry bread no bigger in size than a palm of a hand, which was our sustenance for a single day. As a result of these successive forms of vindictiveness and hatred, and the methods of torture they engaged in against us, we made a great demonstration, crying out 'By spirit and blood we will sacrifice for you, Saddam,' which increased the vindictiveness and rancor in their spirits, and they took 400 prisoners and put them in individual cells after torturing them. These ignorant persons tried to obtain the prisoners' confessions, but we stood up to their evil intentions, which caused them to heighten their cruelty."

"Not only that, but these heretics deprived us of sustenance for a period of 3 days and kept us from water. After that, they restricted our food to half a slice of bread per prisoner per day. This situation went on for a period of 35 days."

I Was Among the Prisoners Who Were To Be Executed

Mr Hamzah 'Abdallah Rashid participated in the discussion. He said, "I was taken prisoner on 27 September 1981 in the Abadan sector. We were about 150 prisoners. I was among the prisoners who were to be executed. I was spared, with four other prisoners, after being wounded. After that, the other prisoners were assembled and sorted out, along with people who were officers or fighting men in the people's army, were wearing camouflage uniforms or had red berets. After that we moved to a prisoners' camp where one of the prisoners was executed and 15 others were wounded by a burst of machine gun fire from one of the executioners. However, we condemned these acts by demonstrating and the hangmen opened fire from their weapons on us and threw tear gas grenades at us. As a result of the acts of barbaric torture, I was afflicted by partial paralysis. The meals consisted of mice."

"While I was suffering from partial paralysis, the doctor tried to force me to support Khomeyni, but I refused and asked him to give me poison to take and put me to rest. However, he refused, and said, 'I will not put you to rest but I will leave you to be tortured further.'"

Mr Sarkis Ishaq Ushana said, "I was taken prisoner on 2 November 1982 in the al-Tayyib sector, and after that moved to a prisoner camp. Since I am a Christian, they tried to compel me to embrace Islam by various arbitrary means and they used repressive techniques by beatings with various implements and compelled us to clean the halls of Iranian soldiers, build halls and load and unload trucks."

Arbitrary Methods

Mr Hamid Muhammad 'Abbas added, "After I was taken prisoner in 1982 in the Dezful sector, they moved us to a number of detention camps where they carried out extremely brutal practices against us such as pulling out teeth, pulling out moustaches by pincers, putting chemicals in the mouth and other techniques, for instance hanging prisoners on walls by nails, forcing prisoners to eat a liquid of grass mixed with soap or giving the prisoners paralyzing injections when they failed to force information from them."

Mr Kakah Barrah Hasan 'Aziz concluded the statements of his fellow returning prisoners and said "The practices of the dishonest persons were not strange from them. What do you expect from people who reject the holy prophet and his Islamic message? They engaged in various methods of torture and abuse against us. They even stooped so low as to put shoes in our mouths and also human excrement, as well as trying to spread dissension between Arabs and Kurds. However, we rejected all that and stood alongside the unity of our defiant Iraqi people."

These are some pictures of the immoral, inhuman treatment which was carried out against Iraqi prisoners by the leaders of evil and disgrace in Tehran. However, no matter what brutality they engaged in against our prisoners, they have reaped only disappointment, defeat and loss.

The returning disabled fighting men conveyed the greetings of all the Iraqi prisoners to the glorious male Iraqis, glorious female Iraqis and the unique leader the president and fighting man, Saddam Husayn, their pride in the soil of the nation and their readiness to give up their lives in sacrifice to its sovereignty and the dignity of its people.

11887

CSO: 4404/342

BANK OF ISRAEL, TREASURY ANNOUNCE LIBERALIZATIONS

Foreign Currency Rules Relaxed

Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 23 Apr 87 p 1

[Article by Avi Temkin]

[Text]

Travellers going abroad will be able, as of today, to take an official foreign currency allowance of \$2,000 per person, up from \$800.

It was one of a series of changes in foreign currency regulations, most of them liberalizations, announced yesterday by the Bank of Israel and the Treasury.

Restrictions on foreign currency followed the balance-of-payments problems of 1983 and 1984, but foreign currency reserves are now at a record high of \$4.3 billion. The increased travel allowance is expected to have little impact on the reserves.

Israelis on the average take \$400 when they go abroad. But because of the 17 per cent levy on foreign currency purchases, most travellers buy on the black market or take funds "out of the mattress."

Finance Ministry Director-General Emmanuel Sharon said the stringent restrictions on foreign currency had come under fire from foreign and local businessmen.

In modern economics there is little room for such limitations, he said, and the new steps will "oil the wheels of international business."

Israeli residents will now also be able to send abroad up to \$1,000 a year as gifts, instead of \$300. The sum that may be transferred to students in foreign universities was increased from \$300 to \$500 a month.

The new regulations allow Israeli residents to take the entire foreign currency allowance in cash, and do not restrict part to traveller's cheques. Those going abroad for business purposes will be allowed to take with them an allowance of \$150 for every day abroad, up to a ceiling of \$3,000.

Another new regulation requires Israelis to sell any real estate they purchased during a residence abroad within a year of their return. The proceeds of the sale will be required to be brought back to Israel. However, the new regulation will not be retroactive.

Foreign residents will be able to deposit foreign currency in cash in *patah* (foreign resident) accounts only up to 10 days after entering the country.

In addition to steps involving individuals, the Treasury and the central bank lifted some of the regulations on companies and the self-employed doing business overseas. The new regulations broaden the possibilities of hedging against changes in exchange and interest rates abroad. Companies will now be allowed to engage not only in forward operations, but will also be able to purchase options abroad to hedge against foreign-trade risks. Firms are also now authorized to engage in forward operations in foreign currencies.

Further Relaxation Expected

Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 26 Apr 87 p 6

[Article by Avi Temkin]

[Text]

The Bank of Israel is considering further liberalization of foreign currency controls, bank governor Michael Bruno told *The Jerusalem Post* on Friday. Proposals for additional steps, dealing mainly with business transactions, are under study, he said.

Bruno denied that political considerations were involved in last week's decision to increase the amount of foreign currency Israelis can legally hold. He said the bank

had made the decision to reduce the level of government intervention in the transactions of firms and individuals.

"If the government thinks that the price of imports is too low then it must increase prices," he said, "but there should be no intervention in the decisions about how firms or individuals spend their foreign currency."

Bruno rejected the demands by the Defence Ministry for additional defence funds. "I do not think that there should be an increase in the Defence Ministry budget," he said. "There will be no economic growth without slashing defence."

The governor said that the Histadrut could contribute towards growth and stability by agreeing that wages should be held down in the forthcoming collective wage negotiations.

There can be wage hikes in those sectors which can afford it, he said, but there must not be increases across the board.

The best thing the Histadrut could do would be to permit sectorial and industrial negotiations, while putting less emphasis on a central wage accord, Bruno declared.

/9274

CSO: 4400/209

KUWAIT

KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA DESCRIBED AS MAJOR AID CONTRIBUTORS

Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic 18 Apr 87 p 9

[Interview with Director of the Economic Cooperation and Development Organization's Department for Cooperation with Non-Member Countries Jirjin Bartsh, by Mahmud 'Abidin: "Kuwait's Aid to Developing Countries Is Close to US\$1 Billion;" date and place not specified]

[Text] Director of the Economic Cooperation and Development Organization's Department for Cooperation with Non-Member Countries Jirjin Bartsh has said that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia lead all the organization's Arab states in their aid to developing countries, adding that both countries provide about 95 percent of all the aid given to those countries by the OPEC states. The cooperation organization official also stressed the important role played by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development in world development, mentioning that the fund has a long reach in this area. Here is the interview AL-WATAN conducted with him during his visit last week.

[Question] Why are you visiting Kuwait?

[Answer] This visit comes under the heading of coordination and cooperation between the Economic Cooperation and Development Organization and the Arab funds. In Kuwait we are meeting with the Arab Development Fund and the Kuwait fund. The latter fund is extremely important, since by virtue of its experts, specialists, and the long experience it enjoys in this field, it represents the Kuwaiti government in international development organizations.

[Question] What about Saudi aid and loans to developing countries?

[Answer] Kuwait and Saudi Arabia lead all the Arab countries which are providing regular aid to developing countries at present. Even though the volume of such aid has fallen off by millions of dollars, it still represents a huge percentage compared to national income. For both countries, aid represents about 30 percent of national income, and together both countries provide about 95 percent of all the aid provided to needy developing countries by the OPEC countries. The other countries which have provided aid in past years, such as the UAE, Libya and Algeria, are at present providing very little aid.

Over the past few years Kuwaiti aid has amounted to about \$1 billion, dropping to about \$750 million in 1985. This year such aid is expected to drop to about \$600 million or even \$500 million.

[Question] How are local financing organizations cooperating with the Economic Cooperation and Development Organization?

[Answer] Ever since 1978, the agencies providing aid to the organization have met with the Arab coordination committee approximately every year. Most of the meetings have been held in Paris, although in 1983 the meeting was held at OPEC Fund headquarters in Vienna, while the February 1986 meetings between the Arab funds and the organization were held in Kuwait. This year's meeting was held in Senegal--the first time our joint meetings have ever been held in a beneficiary country. The joint meetings are an important pivot for reviewing joint transfers of funds to projects and for exchanging experience, and sometimes ideas for joint financing projects have come up during the meetings.

[Question] How much assistance and aid did developing countries receive last year?

[Answer] It is too early to arrive at precise figures, but these countries received about \$30 billion in total aid during the year. The OPEC share of this aid varied between 25 and 30 percent during the Seventies, and dropped to its lowest level of less than 10 percent in 1985. About 8 or 9 percent comes from the Socialist group and the Soviet Union, and 80 percent from the industrial countries.

[Question] How would you assess the aid given to developing countries? Do you think that it helps treat their problems?

[Answer] The results of the aid program, which we started 30 years ago, vary from one country to another and from one region to another. I believe that we have achieved our greatest success through this program in Asia, while we have obviously not been as successful in Africa. I believe that we have failed in Africa because of the climate and the relative smallness of most of the continent's countries compared to Asian countries. An additional factor is the different type of management. Asian management is much more advanced and can adopt modern technological methods for administering aid and loans and managing economic and social matters.

[Question] Given this, is there a new strategy as regards Africa?

[Answer] We have the impression that vast amounts of money have been wasted in Africa and have not been directed towards the most beneficial goals. The countries providing aid have asked the African countries to change their economic policies, for otherwise the aid will never achieve anything. The African governments are well aware of this fact, and are now trying to follow better methods and show greater concern for the money they receive. There is a standing request that the African countries launch reform programs, which require effort and cooperation from both sides--the beneficiary countries and the donor states. We hope that this policy will bear fruit and achieve its goals.

[Question] What about the world debt crisis?

[Answer] This, of course, is the most important problem of the hour--the huge indebtedness of many countries. The developing countries are not alone in facing such a problem; there are European countries as well, such as Romania, Poland and Czechoslovakia. This problem has attracted everyone's attention, and is now being discussed by the World Bank and the IMF. The debtor countries have their demands; some have asked that the debts be cancelled. The head of the World Bank says that this is impossible, because the lending banks will not give new loans to countries which do not meet their installments. I feel that some important decisions will be made in this regard by the end of this year.

[Question] Could you compare Kuwaiti and Saudi aid, which represents 30 percent of their national income, to the aid from industrial nations?

[Answer] Some nations provide more than 10 percent, and other nations give less than 25 percent, such as the United States. On the average, the European countries contribute 50 percent of their national income.

[Question] There is a point of view which says that these rates are insignificant.

[Answer] This makes it imperative that what aid is provided be absorbed in the best possible manner if we want to benefit from it, for we are talking about billions of dollars. Right now it is not that easy to come up with a good plan whereby the developing countries can absorb all this money. The whole matter needs effective management, because management is a problem in itself.

8559

CSO: 4404/346

INDUSTRIALIST PRAISES ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH CHINA

Kuwait AL-QABAS in Arabic 30 Apr 87 p 15

[Article: "Petrochemical Industry Company Board Chairman 'Abd-al-Baqi al-Nuri Praises Chinese-Kuwait Cooperation"]

[Text] Yesterday Petrochemical Industry Company Board Chairman and Delegate Member 'Abd-al-Baqi al-Nuri said that the simultaneous presence in Kuwait of three Chinese delegations, hosted by three different authorities, demonstrates the excellent relations linking Kuwait and China.

In an interview with the Kuwait News Agency, he said that the Chinese delegations now visiting the country reflect the extent to which economic relations between Kuwait and People's China have developed. The same point was stressed by Oil Minister Shaykh 'Ali al-Khalifah al-'Adhabi during his meeting with the Chinese minister of chemical industries, when the Kuwaiti minister said that the political leadership has full friendship and affection for the Chinese leaders and people, and that Kuwaiti officials on all levels are looking for ways to strengthen this relationship so as to mutually benefit both countries.

The First Delegation

Al-Nuri added that these delegations are visiting Kuwait at the same time in connection with joint projects. The first delegation, representing the Chinese chemical industries ministry and headed by Chemical Industries Minister Qin Zhongda, has been visiting Kuwait for the past 5 days in order to negotiate the development of petroleum cooperation between both countries.

The Second Delegation

Al-Nuri mentioned that the second Chinese delegation was headed by the mayor of Chwando City, where the Joint Kuwaiti-Chinese Fertilizer Company's factory will be built. The mayor represents the Chinese government in that city, and according to the Chinese system has prime responsibility for all government offices subordinate to state ministries.

'Abd-al-Baqi al-Nuri said that the joint company will provide fertilizer to meet the needs of Hubei Province.

The Third Delegation

He went on to say that the third Chinese delegation, representing the Chinese Import-Export Organization, conducted negotiations with officials at the Petrochemical Industry Company concerning implementation of the agreement concluded earlier during Finance Minister Jasim al-Kharrafi's visit to China late last year. According to this agreement, Kuwait will provide China with 400,000 tons of Kuwaiti-made chemical fertilizer.

He pointed out that an agreement was reached with the delegation over setting the price of 100,000 tons to be exported to China during the second half of this year, as well as the price of another 100,000 tons to be exported to China during the same period in accordance with an agreement concluded earlier.

He said that the prices arrived at in the latest agreement are higher than the former prices agreed to late last year, which made the company raise its prices considerably. This is one of the company's prerogatives in the fertilizer marketing field.

He added that the Chinese Chemical Industries Ministry owns the Contracting and Chemical Works Company which is participating, along with Kuwait and Tunisia, in the joint project known as SAQAF, founded in 1985, which is one of the many capable joint companies being founded by developing countries. What distinguishes the project is the fact that it is based on cooperation among Southern countries, which is something which the Southern Group has been demanding.

He said that the project is on schedule, and that the purpose of the Chinese minister's visit and his meeting with the oil minister is to find out how the project is proceeding and to try to expedite it, so that it can achieve the Southern countries' economic goals in particular and their social policy in general.

8559

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TTP MINISTER DISCUSSES COMMUNICATIONS LINKS

London AL-HAWADITH in Arabic 10 Apr 87 pp 45-46

[Interview with Ahmad Bin-Suwaydan al-Balushi, Minister of Posts, Telegraphs, and Telephones: "The Omani Communications System Covers the World With a High Degree of Competence," by AL-HAWADITH, Muscat, date not specified]

[Text] Gulf officials and Arab and foreign businessmen stood before one of the most important achievements in the Sultanate of Oman in the area of developing wired and wireless communications systems linking the Sultanate to all corners of the world with capabilities found only in the countries that are most advanced in this field.

Anyone who visits the Sultanate of Oman to take part in official conferences, or to conclude plans and agreements, or to meet with officials or economists or media persons in order to reach private organizations will notice that the government has been able to set up an advanced communications system in the areas of telephone, telex and facsimile, fulfilling the instructions and directives of Sultan states and with all the countries of the world, a feat which has been difficult for many states to achieve. He will notice that this system, which depends on modern installations, includes in its scope the services of satellites, which places the Sultanate among the states which have made hard-to-achieve accomplishments at the official, economic, cultural and media levels, without an advanced communications system like the one which has been used here for several years.

In an interview conducted by AL-HAWADITH with Mr Ahmad Bin-Suwaydan al-Balushi, Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, the minister talked about the most important achievements made in this area in the Sultanate.

At the start of the interview Minister al-Balushi spoke about the development of communications, saying:

During the years of the blessed renaissance, the country has experienced tremendous progress in the area of wired and wireless communications. Unmistakable and undeniable achievements have been made in this respect. It will suffice for me to point out that in 1970 there were only two telephone exchanges, while the number of lines in operation was 557. In 1975 the number of lines in operation in the Sultanate rose to 3,701, while the total capacity reached 12,000 lines. In 1980, the number of lines in operation leaped to

15,044, while the total capacity rose to 24,106; that was at the end of the first 5-year plan. By the end of the second 5-year plan, 1981-1985, the actual capacity in the Sultanate had reached 73,456 lines, while the total number of lines in operation reached 41,320.

One can get an idea of the size and rapid pace of the developments when one realizes that the number of lines in operation in the Sultanate had reached 48,911 by the end of October 1986, while the total capacity jumped to 97,628 lines.

Within the framework of the third 5-year plan, God willing, the project to develop communications in the interior regions will be completed, and some expansions will be made. In addition, work will begin on the first phase of the al-Batinah coastal plain project. The plan calls for this first phase to be completed during the third 5-year plan, and there will also be some other expansions.

The agency has provided the means for direct international communication in a number of ways, so every citizen who has a telephone can get international telephone service through his telephone whenever he wants, since the service is available on all phone lines. All the subscriber has to do to get it is apply for it. The agency has also opened offices for international communications, and there are also public telephones through which the citizen can communicate internationally.

All this has reduced the dependence on other means, such as telex and telegraph, for which the need has decreased. Therefore the existing lines in the sultanate are more than enough to meet the need.

In 1984 the number of local telex subscribers was 1,160; in 1985 that increased to 1,360, and the number will not exceed 1,530 subscribers by about the end of the year. That is a modest increase, due to the quality and ease of using other means of international communication. However, by comparison it can be viewed as a large increase, considering that in 1970 there were only 14 telex lines in the sultanate.

We are not concerned only with the quantitative aspect; rather we place quality at the top of our priorities. Thus the wired and wireless communications services use state of the art technology, the most advanced that money and effort can bring, which is helping to build the structure of comprehensive development.

On this basis, last year we introduced a mobile phone system. The service has become available so far in the Capital Area, the al-Batinah coastal plain, in 'Udhaybah as far as Nazwa, along the 'Ibri-al-Buraymi road, and in the city of Salah. During our upcoming plans, the project will carry out the coverage of the Sur, Quryat, and Salalah roads, thus completing the entire project, whereupon the entire sultanate will have been covered.

In addition, the al-Hajir satellite ground station has been opened, which operates with the Arab satellite, Arabsat. It provides facilitations for the exchange of television, telex, and telephone services among the member states,

and it will soon be used to provide local communications in some of the ground stations in the sultanate, such as those in Salalah, the island of Masirah, and al-Khasab.

Because of the intense activity and the increased communication with the outside world, a new international digital distributor with an expandible capacity of 1,000 lines was built. Direct international service has become so good that far fewer people go to the international communications offices; likewise, the use of telex and telegraph has decreased.

In the interest of the citizens' convenience, the Public Agency for Wire and Wireless Communications has introduced a public telephone system that operates on a card system, which is easier than a communications system using currency--which is also available--since the citizen does not have to carry money with him, or hunt it up whenever he wants to make international calls. There exist lines providing this service in the interior regions.

So far there are 52 public telephone booths, 13 of which operate on the card system. They have been distributed in vital areas with a high population density so that they will perform their function and so that the largest sector of the population will benefit from them.

In addition, 11 coin-operated telephones have been installed in the interior. They have been distributed among Suhar, al-Buraymi, 'Ibri, Sur and Nazwa.

There are 18 telephones in Salalah, of which 4 operate on the card system.

An agreement has been signed to get 350 coin-operated telephones. We have also actually obtained 20 telephones that operate on the card system, though they have not yet been installed, and there is a plan to buy 100 more card-operated telephones.

We will always try to provide more of these telephones whenever the need arises.

In an attempt to improve and to use advanced technology, the agency has tried to solve the problem of providing quick and precise information to any citizen who asks for it by putting a computer in the directory information section.

The agency's concern is not limited only to the main areas; rather its concern extends to the interior regions as well because of its determination to extend service to all corners of the sultanate.

It is within this framework that there is a plan to develop communications in the interior, a plan that will provide 27,000 lines to 39 towns and villages.

As part of our celebration of the sixteenth anniversary of independence, we inaugurated some of the exchanges that are included in this plan in the following areas: Sur, Nazwa, Suhar, Liwa', Majis, 'Ibri, al-Buraymi, and Mahdah.

Studies are underway regarding implementing a project for the al-Batinah coastal plain that will be included in the first phase of the third 5-year plan. Its first phase will encompass al-Sahm, Barka', al-Khaburah, al-Suwayq, Quryat, and al-Rustaq. This phase will provide about 16,000 lines to serve approximately 13 towns and villages.

[Question] This is in regard to the communications system within Oman. What about the communications system to foreign countries.

[Answer] When His Exalted Majesty Sultan Qabus Bin-Sa'id came to power, we began at zero in the field of developing a communications system, because in that year we only had in the entire sultanate 500 telephone lines divided between the cities of Muscat and Matrah. With respect to the mail, we only had three post offices and a few dozen mail boxes. Since that time we have begun to expand and develop the wire and wireless services and the postal service. In 1976 we established a joint company between the government and the telegraph and wireless company, and we set out to introduce some outside lines. Then the company was liquidated in 1980, and the Public Agency for Communications was set up.

Regarding the satellites, we began in 1974 with a small station with 24 channels by way of Britain. In 1976 we brought in an analogous station under the number 1,000, which is internationally known, and we began to link the sultanate to the outside world through direct communications. We brought the network of satellites into the system of transmitting television signals to several regions of the sultanate.

[Question] Does the television signal cover all the regions?

[Answer] So far we have 13 satellite stations which are used for internal communications, television transmission, and providing the means to communicate with the outside. I can say that in the field of wire and wireless communications the sultanate has become one of the foremost states in the world. Figures show that, as do international reports.

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CSO: 4404/326

AIR BASE INAUGURATION, PILOTS' GRADUATION CEREMONY

Dubayy KHALEEL TIMES in English 20 Apr 87 pp 1, 24

[Text]

FINANCE and Industry Minister Shaikh Hamdan bin Rashid yesterday opened a new air base in Dubai at a ceremony which also marked the graduation of a second batch of UAE pilots.

Shaikh Hamdan arrived at the air base at Umm Al Nahad with Defence Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid and unveiled a plaque to mark the opening of the base. This was followed by the playing of the national anthem and recitation from the Holy Quran.

Shaikh Hamdan awarded wing-badges to the graduates who pledged allegiance to the country, and decorated four graduates with medals for their outstanding performance.

Later, accompanied by Shaikh Mohammed and Brigadier Shaikh Ahmed bin Rashid, Commander of the Central Military Command, Shaikh Hamdan inspected the guard of honour. This was followed by a parade in which all units of the armed forces took part. An air demonstration was also held in which pilots showed their flying skills which was greatly admired.

The commander of the new air base welcomed the guests and said that the work on the base was started in 1984. It is designed to receive all kinds of aircraft. It includes hangars, aircraft maintenance section, a medical centre and a fire fighting department.

The ceremony was also attended by Commander of Sharjah Amiri Guard Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Head of Dubai Civil Aviation Department Shaikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Mak-

toum, Commander of Badr II Brigade Shaikh Sultan bin Saqr Al Qasimi and Brigadier Shaikh Ahmed bin Maktoum Al Maktoum.

Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Major-General Mohammed Saeed Al Badi, senior officers and parents of the graduates were also present.

In a statement to Wam Shaikh Mohammed asserted that the country's political leadership was determined to build a strong armed force capable of defending the country against all aggression and guarding its independence and sovereignty from external interference.

He said the leaders of the country, headed by the President, His Highness Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and His Highness Shaikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, were keen on building powerful land, air and naval forces for the "security of our land, airspace and territorial waters." That alone would guarantee the security and peace of "our people and make us independent in our political decisions and effectively safeguard our sovereignty," he said.

Shaikh Mohammed praised Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, for his guidance to the country's armed forces and called upon the graduates to serve their country with devotion and loyalty.

"You are on the threshold of a new career which demands of you hard work, a high degree of efficiency and quality of leadership," he said. "You should prove yourself worthy of the

confidence reposed in you and set good examples for others who will be joining the armed forces so as to enable them to march ahead with confidence and faith in the destiny of the country."

Shaikh Mohammed stressed the importance of the role of the air force in modern warfare, saying: "It provides a protective cover to land and naval forces, specially if the initial air strikes take the enemy by surprise and put the air force in a commanding position."

He drew attention to the part played by individuals, "whether he is a commander or a soldier" in war and said that it was high morale, good planning and mastery over the use of weapons that "help bring victory in the final analysis." It was the soldier's duty to obey the orders of his commander, he said.

The Defence Minister urged the new graduates to attend their training programmes seriously and give time to the study of military science. "A very high degree of courage, a strong sense of patriotism and belonging, and adherence to our Arab identity are needed from all of you," he told the graduates. "You should be ever ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of God and the country and in defence of the Arab nation."

Shaikh Mohammed expressed satisfaction with the performance of the graduates and the officers and men of the armed forces who took part in the military exercise.

He said the demonstration of their skill made everyone confident of their capability. "I am sure our youths are fully capable of shouldering their responsibility and performing their duty with confidence and efficiency," he said.

YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC

FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSES MEDIATION, REGIONAL ISSUES

London AL-TADAMUN in Arabic 18-24 Apr 87 pp 22, 23

[Article] "Sanaa Awaiting Accord in Aden, Hostilities Increasingly Bitter Whenever Tehran Turns Deaf Ear, We Will Join No Axis Even for Red Sea Security, Refugee Camp Warfare a Maze"]

[Text] An interview with YAR foreign minister, Dr 'Abad-al-Karim al-Irani is always something special. It always contains new information for journalist, and throws light on some littled-noted corner. In this interview Dr al-Irani replied to questions by AL-TADAMUN which had thought it unlikely that there would be any substantial addition to the contents of an interview held in Sanaa at the end of last year. However, after transcribing the tape of the latest meeting, we realized that, with his rare political insight, Dr. al-Irani has managed to clarify for the arab reader numerous issues and developments that took place in the time between the two interviews.

[Question] There have been some changes in the Arab arena since the last interview, the most important of which was the Islamic summit in Kuwait against a background of difficult circumstances, the refugee camp warfare and Egypt's participation at the highest level in the Islamic Summit proceedings; can all these indicators and variables be a prelude to a new stage in Arab politics?

[Answer] First of all, by virtue of its appellation, an Islamic summit does not necessarily have to involve exclusively Arab repercussions. The inter-Arab meetings issue that motivated a summit was the Gulf war. Unfortunately, in this connection, the summit was unable to emerge with anything new. The finest statement made was by someone who is neither a Sunni nor a Shi'ite--it was made by UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar. Whenever we Arabs discuss the war we align ourselves, of necessity, against Iran. The Secretary General, who is responsible for [world] security, spoke with sincerity, sympathy and objectivity saying: "How can a solution reached?" It is a pity that Iran is not present; such presence might have brought the different view points closer together. Iran, however, trusts no one. It does not trust the United Nations, the Security Council, international meditation, or the Islamic summit. The summit broke no new grounds in regard to the Gulf war. All the same we are optimistic over de Cuellar's statements, and hope that they will provide a positive new impetus. If our optimism is well placed, then the Kuwait Islamic summit will prove to have been a historic event. However what

happened after the summit adjourned was that Iran escalated its attacks, a calamity for both peoples concerned since it means that Iran is turning a deaf ear to any pleas, listening neither to de Cuellar nor to anybody else.

[Question] What about Egypt's presence? Is this an indication that it might return to the Arab League?

[Answer] Yemen was the first country to play host to Egypt after the latter's to the Organization of Islamic States at the foreign ministers' conference. Every Yemeni holds Egypt in special regard. As regards its return to the Arab League, I have already spoken about this matter with AL-TADAMUN. However, the question is whether the meetings that held in the context of the Islamic summit were organized under an Islamic plan without reflecting positively or negatively on inter-Arab relations. We were optimistic when it was reported that Egyptian President Husni Mubarak had met and talked with President Hafedh al-Assad. The media tried to give the meeting greater importance than it deserved and Syria tried to clarify matters. Sentiments cannot but be moved. I do not believe that the meeting resulted in nothing but I would not gamble on it. We are Arabs and Muslims, we share the same history and the same destiny. Relations between the Syrian and Egyptian peoples are stronger than those between any two Arab nations. Since the days of al-Dhahir Beibars, the wars against Tartars, Salah al-Din and the resistance to invasion by the Crusaders, there have been countless memories and joint efforts. No Egyptian or Syrian can ignore so rich a historical heritage. As for the Islamic summit, I do not believe that it has led to any positive results in regard to inter-Arab relations.

[Question] You were a member of the Committee of Seven to contain the refugee camp blockade and met with Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese officials. Can you give us an idea about what happened during those meetings? What is the justification advanced for continuation of a conflict that serves no end but to further deterioration of the Arab situation?

[Answer] We have a special regard and love for the Palestinians and Lebanese, not with a view to making any political or propaganda gains. Yemen's position was that should the issue become more complex and diverse, the very purpose of the Committee's existence will be negated. And so it has been: the matter has grown in complexity, and the Committee has been unable to halt the refugee camp hostilities, nor has it been able to determine the relationship between the Palestinians and their Lebanese environment. We met with Lebanese and Palestinian officials. They were sympathetic to our position, but the whole issue has diversified and drifted into a gloomy maze. Personally I am grieved that Arab impotence has reached this point.

[Question] We meet at a time when Kuwaiti mediation between you and 'Ali Nasir Muhammad, and authorities in the South is active. Has this mediation led to any developments? Have you been able to settle the problem of migrants from the South, particularly since their number last month exceeded one thousand?

[Answer] Unfortunately there is nothing new.

[Question] Are there any changes in North Yemen's position?

[Answer] The only change is the influence on the thinking of our brothers from the South. As a matter of fact we have pressured them to accept Kuwait as a witness. The North feels that, a year having elapsed since the events in question, it is time to have a witness, and hopefully more than one. Kuwait is the closest country to both parties which have no particular sensitivity towards it. It is to be hoped that matters are handled justly and equitably although I cannot say that they have been very fruitful so far.

[Question] What are the basic, starting points from which the dialogue is beginning? Is mediation or dialogue predicated on the premise that the migrants return to their posts and functions or that there be political reconciliation between both parties to the Yemen Socialist Party?

[Answer] The formula that we hope our brothers in the South will agree to is that of national reconciliation which is a very different thing from the Lebanese concept of reconciliation. With true good will the matter becomes greatly simplified, there being no sectarian, international or ideological complications. We hope that our brothers will be divinely inspired to realize that nothing should be allowed to complicate the issue.

[Question] During an interview with AL-TADAMUN, Sudanese Prime Minister al-Sadiq al-Mahdi spoke about an Aden-Ethiopia-Tripoli axis and its impact on the issue of South Sudan. You represent one of the most important countries in the Horn of Africa but we do not see that you have your own policy on the Red Sea. If such a policy exists how would you describe its foundations and dimensions?

[Answer] This question is always being brought up. I believe--to quote statements made by President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih--that this part of the world should remain distant from any kind of international polarization and free of military bases and naval forces. It is impossible to stay away from international influences, but polarization would throw this part of the world into the thick of international conflict. Yemen's position is very clear in this regard. We do not accept being party to any grouping, axis or alliance of this kind. We oppose any such moves in the region. In any case there is no intense international polarization in the region as is the case in the Pacific, or in the northern and western Mediterranean. There are various influences, but that is another matter.

[Question] What relations exist between YAR and Ethiopia for example?

[Answer] Our relations with Ethiopia are good. There are historical and cultural traditions of civilization which have a very solid impact on us, be they pre-Islamic or later. A high percentage of Ethiopians are Muslims. Islam was propagated in Ethiopia by Yemenis. There are maternal relations, kinship and intermarriage as well as trading and commercial relations, all of which fit into a sound geographical context that benefits both peoples.

[Question] Can relations to which you are referring play a positive role in the reconciliation between Ethiopia and the Sudan over the South question?

The latest statement by the Sudanese prime minister stresses that South Sudan is no longer a Sudanese problem but a question of external aggression by a neighboring state, namely Ethiopia.

[Answer] In this regard, there is no special initiative at the present time, but were we to assume that circumstances allowed us to play such a part, the President would have no hesitation in doing so. This is all the more particularly so since the Sudan is a sister state and the Arab nation should not stand idly by as a spectator while the Sudan suffers a plot fomented by the South. We certainly do not call for a declaration of war against Ethiopia with which, as I have said, we have historical relations, but we do feel that there is a need to establish a uniform Arab position in order to reach, along with Ethiopia, a acceptable solution. In 1985 the Ethiopian foreign minister said to me: "Question of South Sudan is related to, and cannot be separated from the question of Eritrea. Any understanding with Ethiopia must take that situation into consideration, but this does not mean that we would be selling out the people in Eritrea. We are not a party to the issue, but I believe that if sufficient efforts were made in Ethiopia or in the Arab nation to solve the problem, the Eritreans could reach a satisfactory formula that would end the tension and conflict that are draining the endeavors of all parties concerned.

13291/12951

CSO: 4404/325

ERSHAD CHAIRS MEETING TO REVIEW FOOD SITUATION

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 7 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

A high level meeting yesterday reviewed the country's food situation and noted that stock position of grains was sufficient to meet the demands.

The meeting chaired by President H. M. Ershad also sought to find out the reasons behind the recent fluctuations in rice prices, and observed that there had been a tendency for hoarding and attempts to create an artificial crisis.

It was also decided that a central monitoring cell will be set up in Dhaka to closely watch the market situation and movement of rice prior to the Boro arrival in couple of weeks' time.

Officials attending the meeting observed that the fluctuations in the market were mostly due to delay in shipments from local supply depots. They also noted the obstructions to the flow of traffic on the highways due to strikes and other causes.

President Ershad told the meeting, attended by senior officials and district administrators, that the stock position was enough with 400,000 tons in reserve, and another 400,000 tons arriving within next two weeks.

He ruled out the famine situation and directed the concerned officials to remove bottlenecks standing in the way of smooth movement of grains to the market.

The total production of rice and wheat for the 1986-87 fiscal year was estimated at 16 million tons, of which 14.5 million tons was rice. during the period 1.8 millions tons of grains was scheduled to be imported to meet the deficits, according food officials.

BSS adds : Stock of cereals in government reserve is sufficient to meet the demand and hence there is no apprehension of any crisis, whatsoever, President Hussain Muhammad Ershad told the Deputy Commissioners at a meeting held at President's Secretariat here.

He said the only thing required is to ensure supply of foodgrains wherever required and monitor the situation closely

The President told the deputy commissioners and food ministry officials to see to it that there is no delay in the supply of foodgrains due to procedural matters or formalities.

During the meeting, State Minister for Food gave a resume of the food situation, describing it as "satisfactory", and the line of action formulated to ensure supply to every part of the country.

Some Deputy Commissioners also informed the President of the latest position of food and its price line in their respective area.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Deputy Prime Ministers Prof M.A. Matin and Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Relief Minister Shamsul Huq, Communications Minister M. Matlur Rahman, LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Shah Moazzem Hossain, State Minister for Food Sardar Amjad Hossain, PSO to the Supreme Commander Major General Sadequr Rahman Chowdhury and senior officials of the President's Secretariat and Food Ministry.

The President said lower Aman production than stipulated

during the last season due to late monsoon has created a small gap in the demand and supply position, but the whole thing is within the control

of the government. He said the month of Chaitra and the first half of Baisakh which fall between the Aman season and harvest of Boro and wheat have traditionally been considered a lean period for food supply in the country. In the light of that experience, he said, the government has been maintaining a vigilance on the food position and taken all measures since last month to ensure supply wherever necessary.

President Ershad directed the deputy commissioners and the Food Ministry to coordinate their works so that no area suffers from any food shortage till the harvest of Boro paddy. For this, he suggested them to keep close vigilance on the food position and ensure supply of cereals in their areas at fair price.

He asked D C's to make direct communication with the food monitoring system and keep them informed about day to day food position. They should also gear up distribution of cereals down from the upazila level, he said adding. At the same time they should keep watch at the traditional vulnerable spots.

The president said, I do not

like to see any part of the country suffers from food shortage when there is enough stock.

In this context, he mentioned about the tendency in a section of foodgrain traders for hoarding and told the deputy commissioners to take necessary measures after assessing the situation.

He also told them that the government was contemplating more pragmatic and effective system of supervision of the Food for Work projects.

Making an evaluation of the last five years of his government when the nation got a direction for development, President Ershad said by fulfilling our commitment a democratic government has been established and an elected parliament has been functioning to guide the affairs of the country.

The President opined that the general law and order situation in the country is quite good but regretted the tendency specially in a section of the students to create indiscipline.

In this connection, he mentioned the tragic incidents that occurred in recent times in Dhaka and Chittagong involving the students and said the society cannot afford to accommodate such tendency of indulgence in indisciplined activities.

President Ershad informed

the meeting that government is considering stern penal actions of a maximum of death sentence and minimum six years rigorous imprisonment for possession of bombs and throwing the same.

In this respect, he mentioned about deterrent measures taken by his government on acid throwing and said as a result such crimes has been drastically come down.

Turning to the land reforms and distribution of land among the landless, the President said land reforms is our commitment. It was merely a political slogan by past government but we did it in reality, he said.

President Ershad asked the deputy commissioners to make the khas land distribution programme a success by identifying and recovering such khas land and ensure its proper distribution as designed for.

Giving a briefing on food position, Sardar Amzad Hossain informed the meeting that price of cereals which registered rise last month has come down to a stabilised stage following open market operation. He said fluctuation in price line of foodgrains is nothing abnormal in Bangladesh which is prone to natural calamities like early or late monsoon, drought, floods and cyclone, but to meet such situation enough food stock is being maintained in government reserve.

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CSO: 4600/1609

PAPER REPORTS OUTCOME OF BANGLA-INDIAN BORDER TALKS

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 7 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

The three-day border talks between senior officials of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Border Security Force (BSF) of India concluded in Dhaka yesterday without any agreement on major problems like the repatriation of tribal refugees or operations by Chakma miscreants.

But an optimistic note was struck by the Director Generals of the BDR and the BSF that solutions to those problems could be found soon at higher level and that the two sides agreed to cooperate with each other in resolving those.

A press release issued at the end of the talks said the "concluding session ended in a very friendly and cordial atmosphere." During both the sessions, matters relating to major problems at the borders were discussed. Both the director generals identified the major issues on the border and agreed to cooperate in resolving those in a spirit of friendship and cordiality.

At the end of the talks, both the director generals told waiting newsmen that they expected solutions to the major issues.

Major General Sofi Ahmed Chondhury, DG, BDR said that the matters relating to repatriation of some 26,000 tribal refugees were discussed and hoped that a solution would be found soon at higher level. "Our duty is to find out a modus operandi for their early return", General Choudhury said referring to the postponement of repatriation of the tribals from camps in the Tripura state of India.

He reiterated that conditions for the return of the refugees remained favourable and Bangladesh wanted them back as soon as possible.

Mr M.C. Misra, DG, BSF told the newsmen that they had discussed everything including the Chakma's infiltration, activities of criminals, smuggling, etc. Asked whether the discussions included the repatriation of the refugees and cross-border operations by so-called Shanti Bahini miscreants, he avoided a direct reply. He said that his country had nothing to do with the Shanti Bahini and maintained that it would not allow anyone to cross the border. He added that refugees were allowed "because they came in big numbers after we tried to halt them."

BSS adds: Major General Sofi Ahmed Chowdhury, the BDR chief and leader of the Bangladesh delegation told reporters that the two sides had agreed to alert their respective forces to guard against the miscreants' activities in the border areas of the Hill Tracts.

The Chief of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) Mr. M C. Misra, who led the Indian side at the talks was also present during the briefing at the airport prior to the departure of the Indian delegation yesterday.

Major General Chowdhury said a settlement with regard to the Chakma repatriation was in progress. "Let us hope their repatriation takes place soon."

Mr. Misra, however, said that further discussions should

take place at different levels—at the points of the local administration and at appropriate diplomatic level—to step up efforts for the early repatriation of the Chakma refugees.

He said it was beyond perview of the border security forces of the two countries to ensure early repatriation of the Chakmas. "We are involved in it since we are at the border. The solution of this problem does not lie on us."

Meanwhile, sources close to the talks told the news agency the three-day discussions covered all major border problems between the two countries with the two sides having agreed to cooperate in resolving those in a spirit of friendship and cordiality.

Apart from the Chakma issue, the two sides discussed, among other things, the problems of transborder crimes, smugglings, kidnapping and illegal crossing of the borders and law and order situation in the two Bangladeshi enclaves of Dahagram and Angorpota.

With regard to the repatriation of the Chakmas, the Bangladesh side had conveyed to the Indian delegation that Bangladesh was ready to welcome back home all genuine refugees.

Before leaving for home yesterday, the Director General of the BSF paid a courtesy call on the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Prof M. A. Matin, and also had a meeting with Foreign Secretary Fakhruddin Ahmed.

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CSO: 4600/1609

HASINA MEETS NEWSMEN ON RETURN FROM U.S., UK

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 11 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina, who returned home after a month-long visit to the United States and the United Kingdom on Friday reiterated her party's stand to continue struggle against the military regime and establish people's democracy. "We do not want martial democracy and we shall fight for the people's democracy", she asserted.

Talking to newsmen at Zia International Airport on arrival from London, the Awami League chief said that her visit to the USA and the UK was fruitful and she had exchanged views with the Government leaders, Senators, Congressmen in the United States and MPs in London. She observed that during her visit to those countries "it gave me much pain to see that the people in America and Britain enjoy so much democratic rights while in our country we have no right". She said that in the United States the definition of democracy meant as President Abraham Lincoln said "democracy of the people, by the people and for the people" but in Bangladesh the situation completely different.

Sheikh Hasina said that in her discussions with the Government leaders, Senators and Congressmen in the United States she had given the real political and economic situation of Bangladesh and "they are now convinced that democracy does not exist here". She hoped that the Government and the people of the USA and the UK and other freedom-loving nation would support the struggle of the people of Bangladesh to establish "people's democracy."

Asked about the statement of the 31 intellectuals demanding an interim government, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina said, "there was nothing wrong in it". But she observed that the statement was not clear and specific. She raised a number of questions as to what should be the definition of the interim government, who will form it, how it will be formed and how the power will be transferred. She said that she was confused by the state-

ment of the intellectuals on the interim government, after Mr. Rab's statement. She reminded all that past experience proved that there could be no free and fair election under any military man. She further added that in the last general election people rejected the military regime and voted for Awami League and its allies but the military junta trampled the people's verdict under their boot.

The Awami League chief asserted that no one excepting political elements could give free and fair election. In this connection she said, "I would have given free and fair election in six months time if my party was elected". Reiterating her party's stand to ensure people's democracy through election, she said that Awami League was never afraid of facing any election and it would fight future elections with the support of the people.

Asked to comment on the allegation by BNP and others that Awami League betrayed the five-point movement by participating in the Jatiya Sangsad election and now engaged in an arranged game with the Government, Sheikh Hasina

said that it was an irony that those who were born in the pockets of generals and still live in cantonment call Awami League an ally of the military regime. She recalled that BNP, Awami League and others decided to contest all the 300 JS seats, but it remained a mystery why Begum Zia remained aloof from the election at the last moment. She regretted that BNP now blamed Awami League for contesting the election but what would be the answer if any one say BNP gave a walk over to Jatiya Party by not participating in the election. She added that most of the Jatiya Party Ministers and MPs belonged to BNP and during the last election campaign BNP and others who boycotted the polls did not criticise President Ershad and Jatiya Party but made Awami League their only target of opposition. She said that she was ready to forget everything for greater unity in the interest of movement for people's democracy but she advised all not to indulge in false and unfair propaganda against Awami League.

While her attention was drawn to the price spiral of essential commodities, the Awami League chief said that her party always fought for the welfare of the common man and she would herself lead movement to

check price spiral. She asked why those forces who supported the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for so-called price and other essential items.

On arrival at the airport, Sheikh Hasina was given a rousing reception by Awami League leaders. Prominent among them were Awami League Presidium member Mr. Abdul Mannan, Mr. Zillur Rahman, General Secretary Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Mr. Tofael Ahmed, Mr. Amir Hossain Amu, Mrs. Ivy Rahman, Mr. Motiur Rahman, Mr. Mostafa Mohsin Mantu, MP, Mr. Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and Mr. Mofazzal Hossain Maya. Outside the airport building thousands of Awami League workers were waiting to greet their leader.

Addressing the party leaders and workers, Sheikh Hasina said that she had come back to give leadership to the movement against martial democracy and establish the rights of the people. She told her cheering workers that Bangabandhu never compromised with the military regime and as his daughter she would never bow down her head to any fascist government. She advised her party leaders and workers to remain united and always stand beside people to earn their affection, respect and confidence.

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CSO: 4600/1612

PAKISTAN FINANCE MINISTER MEETS PRESS ON ARRIVAL

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 5 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

The Finance and Economic Affairs Minister of Pakistan, Mian Mohammad Yasin Khan Wattoo, on Saturday expressed his confidence that there were wide scope for collaboration in different fields between Bangladesh and his country because of "complimentarities which exist in our economies," reports BSS.

There is a lot of scope for bilateral trade between the two countries, he added.

The Pakistan Minister was talking to newsmen at the Zia International Airport on his arrival at the head of a nine-member delegation to the second meeting of Bangladesh-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission beginning in Dhaka today (Sunday).

Commerce Minister Abdul Munim received Mr. Wattoo at the airport. Also present on the occasion were Secretary, External Resources Division M.K. Anwar, Bangladesh Ambassador to Pakistan C.M. Shafi Sami, Pakistan Ambassador to Bangladesh Riaz H. Khokhar and other high officials.

Mr. Wattoo said, "we can not only have increased bilateral trade but can exchange trainees, experts intellectuals and production technology besides establishing joint ventures."

Describing the two countries as

"quite important economic partner", the Pakistan Finance Minister said, "Our economic cooperation was developing very fast since 1976-77 and hope it will grow further in coming days."

Elaborating, he said the volume of trade between the two countries had gone up to 120 million dollars last year from 33 million dollars in 1976.

Mr. Wattoo pointed out that the figure could have been much higher had there been regular joint economic meetings after the first one held in 1979. He, however, said that efforts would be taken to hold regular meetings of the Jec.

The Pakistan Minister said that there was a large number of other items which could be traded between the two countries for mutual benefit.

He said his team would carry out an in depth analysis of economic cooperation possibilities and identify concrete avenues.

"We will review our economic relations as well as suggest new ideas and fresh proposals specially for improvement of bilateral trade relation," he said.

The Pakistan Finance Minister said there exists a good potential for setting up of joint industrial projects in Bangladesh in the fields of textiles, processing of agricultural products, pharmaceutical plants, automobile

parts and electronics.

He expressed his gratitude for the warm reception accorded to him since he boarded the Biman flight in Karachi and at the Zia International Airport.

Dawood, Monno, Bawany in city

besides officials, eight prominent industrialists namely M.A. Dawood, Shahzada Monno and Yahya Bawany accompanied the Minister.

Mr. Wattoo will call on President H.M. Ershad during his stay in the capital.

He will also call on Deputy Prime Minister Moudud Ahmed, Commerce Minister Abdul Munim, Finance Minister M. Syedur Rahman, Foreign Minister Humayun Rashid Chowdhury and Health Minister Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury.

The second meeting of Bangladesh-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission begins in Dhaka today (Sunday) at 9:30 a.m. in the committee room the NeC building at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

Commerce Minister Abdul Munim will lead the 20-member Bangladesh delegation at the meeting while the Pakistan side will be headed by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Mian Mohammad Yasin Khan Wattoo.

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CSO: 4600/1605

PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH JOINT PANEL MEETS IN DHAKA

6 Apr Events

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 7 Apr 87 pp 1, 12

[Text]

Bangladesh and Pakistan on Monday exchanged documents of ratification for the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to the taxes on income at a simple ceremony at State Guest house in Dhaka, reports BSS.

Mr. M. Syeduzzaman, Minister for Finance and the visiting Finance and Economic affairs Minister of Pakistan, Mian Mohamunad Yasin Khan Watto, exchanged the notes on behalf of their respective government.

The agreement to this effect was signed in Dhaka in 1981 with a view to promoting economic cooperation between the two countries particularly in the private sector.

After exchanging the notes Mr. Syeduzzaman expressed the hope that the business communities of the two countries would take full advantage of this treaty for increased economic cooperation.

He said this would provide an additional impetus to the private sectors to promote trade and commerce.

Mr. Watto said the ratification as 'long overdue' and with the exchange of notes a long standing desire had been fulfilled. Both the countries will be greatly benefited from this, he added.

He described it as another step toward increased economic cooperation between the two brotherly countries.


Mr. M.K. Anwar Secretary External Resources Division, Mr. C.M. Shafi Sami Bangladesh

Ambassador to Pakistan Mr. Riaz H. Khokhar, Pakistan ambassador to Bangladesh and officials of the two countries were present on the occasion.

Another report adds:— The working groups of the second meeting of Bangladesh-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission (JEC) continued their meetings for the second day on Monday.

A conference source told BSS that the groups—industry, economy and technical cooperation and commerce and trade were preparing the draft of the agreed minutes to be signed between the two countries today (Tuesday).

The Ministers of Bangladesh and Pakistan at their first meeting of the JEC on Sunday set up two working groups to review the economic relations and suggest new areas of cooperation.

The source said  made good progress during which was held in a atmosphere of friendly and cordiality on Monday.

Wattoo calls on Ershad

Visiting Minister for Finance and Economic affairs of Pakistan Mian Mohammad Yasin Khan Wattoo called on President Hussain Muhammad Ershad at Bangabhaban on Monday.

During the meeting, the Pakistan Minister apprised the President about the discussions that had taken place in the meeting of the Bangladesh-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission.

Mr Wattoo said the meeting had specifically discuss measures for further expansion of cooperation in the fields of trade and commerce and joint venture enterprises between the two countries.

President Ershad expressed his satisfaction at the smooth progress of the Joint economic commission.

Commerce Minister M.A. Munim Finance Minister M. Syeduzzaman, Secretary External Resources Division M.K. Anwar, Bangladesh Ambassador to Pakistan C.M. Shafi Sami and Pakistan Ambassador to Bangladesh Reaz Khokhar were present.

Moudud

He also called on the Deputy Prime Minister In-charge of the Ministry of Industries Mr. Moudud Ahmed at Shilpa-Bhaban in Dhaka

on Monday PID handout said.

He stayed with the DPM for some time and discussed matters relating to mutual and bilateral interest.

MR. Moudud Ahmed explained to the visiting Pakistani Minister the salient features of the industrial policy now being implemented

He narrated the investment opportunities gauranted in the policy and informed that Bangladesh was now enjoying congenial milieu for investement with her political stability and pragmatic policies.

Mr. Yasin Khan expressed his satisfaction at the progress and development so far made by Bangladesh in particular during the present regime. He appreciated the policy measures undertaken by the present government and said that Pakistan was keen to further increase bilateral cooperation and relations with Bangladesh.

He said that there was immense prospect for establishing joint venture industries in both the friendly countries.

DPM Moudud Ahmed hoped that the bilateral relations between the two countries would further be strengthend in the days to come.

A Staff Correspondent adds:— The Visiting Pakistani industrialists team had a meeting with the representatives of industry in Bangladesh on Monday at Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI).

The two sides discussed a number of concrete and specific areas and proposals for industrial cooperation and collaboration between the two countries.

The Bangladesh side at the discussions were led by Mr. Morshed Khan, President, BCI while the Pakistani side, by Mr. Raja Abdur Rahman, Chairman, Raja Group of Industries in Pakistan.

Closing Press Conference

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 8 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Finance and Economic Affairs Minister of Pakistan Mian Mohammad Yasin Khan Wattoo said in Dhaka on Tuesday that Pakistan-Bangladesh bilateral economic and trade relations were poised for a steady all-round expansion.

He expressed his 'total satisfaction' over the outcome of the second meeting of the Joint Economic Commission between the two countries in Dhaka. There is tremendous goodwill and sincerity on both sides to strengthen the existing economic and trade relations between the two countries, he said.

Addressing a Press conference at the close of the Joint Economic Commission meeting at the Secretariat block of External Resources Division at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, the Pakistani Finance and Economic Affairs Minister said that there was a felt-need in the private sectors of the two countries to promote joint venture industrial projects. When asked to specify the areas where such joint venture projects would be taken up for processing and implementation, he stated that the areas were still under discussion between the representatives of trade and industry of the two countries.

Commerce Minister Major General (Retd) Abdul Munim, who led the Bangladesh side at the meeting of the Joint Economic Commission, was present at the Press conference. Also present were Finance Minister Mr. M. Syeduzzaman, ERD Secretary Mr. M.K. Anwar, Bangladesh Ambassador to Pakistan Mr. C.M. Shafi Sami and Pakistan Ambassador to Bangladesh Mr. Reaz H. Khokar.

Commerce Minister Mr. Abdul Munim told the Press conference that Pakistan emerged as the third largest trade partner of Bangladesh in 1986.

Mian Wattoo informed the newsmen that his country offered a credit proposal for 50 million US dollars for financing Bangladesh's imports of certain specified categories from Pakistan. If necessary, the credit facility under the proposal can further be expanded by another 50 million US dollars, he added.

Replying to a question about certain anomalies in customs and excise duties which resulted in third-party trade operations in merchandise goods of the two countries, Mian Wattoo said that his Government would examine such anomalies, if

any, to remove all constraints in the expansion of bilateral trade in the mutual interests of the two countries.

The Pakistani Minister also said that his country had already shipped 50,000 tons of foodgrains to Bangladesh and another 50,000 tons of foodgrains would be sent soon under the Special Trade Arrangements (STA).

Meanwhile, Bangladesh and Pakistan signed on Tuesday an agreed minutes at the close of the three-day meeting of the Joint Economic Commission. The deliberations of the meeting, held in two working groups—one on trade and finance and the other on industry, technical and other fields of cooperation—reflected the common resolve of the two countries to widen and strengthen their existing trade and economic relations, the agreed minutes noted.

The Pakistani Minister reiterated at the meeting that his country would take effective steps to increase import of tea from Bangladesh so as to reach the level of 20 million kg per year. The Bangladesh side reiterated its earlier agreement in principle to purchase 60,000 bales of raw cotton from Pakistan.

The Pakistan side agreed to examine the proposal for a long-term arrangement for import of jute and the possibility of importing telecommunication cables from Bangladesh. The two sides agreed to promote trade of non-traditional items.

Shipping to be streamlined

Agreement was also reached between Bangladesh and Pakistan to streamline shipping arrangements. Two national airlines will discuss the proposal for introduction of wide-bodied aircraft on reciprocal basis.

Collaborative arrangements were agreed upon in the meeting in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, livestock, education, science and technology. Both sides further agreed to examine the possibility of concluding

a scientific and technological cooperation agreement.

On the trade front, both the countries agreed to hold single-country exhibitions in each other's country for creating an awareness about their export potentials. Bangladesh will hold in this connection a single-country fair in Karachi from April 25 to May 5, 1987.

About the joint ventures, the agreed minutes noted the agreement of both sides to promote the same in medium and large-scale industrial sectors. It was indicated that possible equity participation by Pakistan in Bangladesh could be in the form of machinery, capital equipment and technical know-how. Joint venture cooperation, the two sides identified, can take place in the fields of surgical goods, fibre glass boards, sports goods etc.

The two sides further agreed to cooperate in the small industrial sector specially with regard to training, transfer to technology and sharing of experience in selected fields like hand-knitted woolen carpets, glass bangles, silk, cane furniture etc.

The two sides also agreed to have closer collaboration for production of complementary items between parastatal corporations such as Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory, GEM Plant etc. with their counterpart organisations in Pakistan such as Pakistan Automobile Corporation (PAC) and Heavy Mechanical Complex.

BSS adds:—Mian Wattoo left Dhaka on Tuesday for Bangkok at the end of his four-day stay in Bangladesh.

Commerce Minister Mohammad Abdul Munim, Secretary, External Resources Division M.K. Anwar, Bangladesh Ambassador to Islamabad, C.M. Shafi Sami, Pakistan Ambassador to Bangladesh Riaz H. Khokhar and officials of External Resources Division and Commerce Ministry were present on the occasion.

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CSO: 4600/1610

ASIAN MINISTERS MEET ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Ershad Opens Conference

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 9 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Ministers and senior officials from eleven Asian nations yesterday began a two-day meeting in the city to provide political support and mobilise resources to improve the lifestyle of the rural poor in the Asia-Pacific region.

Bangladesh President H.M. Ershad inaugurated the meeting with a call to harness the huge human resources of the region to improve the socio-economic condition of the rural poor through their active participation in development efforts.

The meeting, jointly organised by Bangladesh Government and the Dhaka-based Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), is being attended by 70 delegates including nine ministers of agriculture and rural development from seven countries.

Nineteen representatives apart from nine ministers from seven countries attending the meeting are from Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, The Netherlands and international organisations like the Asian Development Bank, AIT, Asia Foundation, CIDA, Commonwealth Secretariat, DANIDA, World Bank, ILO, NORAD, SIDA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF WFP and FAO. The inaugural session, chaired by Bangladesh Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Shah Moazzem Hossain,

was also addressed by Pashupati Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, Minister for Panchayat and Local Development of Nepal, who is also the current chairman of the governing council of CIRDAP, Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, Minister for Agriculture, Malaysia, B.K. Dewan, Minister of State for Local Government, Bangladesh A. T. M. Shamsul Huq, Director CIRDAP and Anis-uz-zaman Khan, Additional Secretary in-charge of Local Government.

The inaugural session was attended, among others, by Vice-President A. K. M. Nurul Islam, Prime Minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Deputy Prime Ministers Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Prof M.A. Matin and Maudud Ahmed, Information Minister Anwar Zahid, Works Minister Shafiqul Ghani Swapan, Deputy Foreign Minister Wazed Ali Khan Pannu and diplomats.

Setting the tone of the meeting President Ershad said that "there can hardly be any meaningful progress" in the Asia and Pacific region "without genuine improvement in the quality of life of the rural people."

He said that the basic problems faced by these nations were similar in nature, the main problem was how to improve the socio-economic condition of the rural people through their active participation in development efforts.

The President stressed the need for cooperation and ex-

change of knowledge and experience among the countries to meet the basic needs of the people for food, clothing, shelter, education and medicare. "The huge manpower resources of these countries can be harnessed for the progress and prosperity of the nation. What is needed for this is to build up an awareness in people of all strata of life for their participation in nation-building activities," President Ershad added.

He further said that the participation of ministers and senior officials dealing with rural development from CIRDAP member and non-member countries and representatives from donor countries and agencies indicated their common interest in ameliorating the lot of the rural poor in the region.

The President spoke of the unemployed women who comprise a significant segment of the improvised rural population and said means have to be found out to alleviate poverty of the rural people.

Turning to Bangladesh, he said, nearly 85 per cent of the population live in 68,000 villages and hence the Government has accorded top priority to rural uplift in the agenda of development activities. Reliance on the people for initiating and sustaining the process of development and political power to the people for preparing and implementing local plans are being considered important aspects of the new strategy of

development from below, he pointed out.

President Ershad spoke of the 'positive steps' taken by his Government to take administration to the doorsteps of the villagers with a view to ensuring their participation in the development programmes and said a well-defined decentralisation programme, in the form of upazila system has been introduced embracing both administrative and local government institutions.

The inaugural session over, President Ershad posed for a photograph with the leaders and members of delegation participating in the meeting.

After the inaugural session the ministers and officials took up the day's business of electing Bangladesh Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Shah Moazzem Hossain as the Chairman of the meeting. India's Minister of State for Rural Development, Ramananda Yadav, proposed the name of Shah Moazzem Hossain as Chairman of the meeting.

Later Shah Moazzem Hossain proposed the names of two vice-chairmen—Pashupati Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana, Minister for Panchayat and Local Development of Nepal, representing South Asia and Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, Minister of Agriculture of Malaysia, representing the South East Asian region.

It also elected D. Bandopadhyaya, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, India as Chairman of the drafting committee for the 'Dhaka declaration', laying the future action programme of the CIRDAP.

Briefing newsmen at the end of the two working sessions yesterday evening A. T. M. Shamsul Huq, Director of CIRDAP said that President Ershad will lay the foundation of the CIRDAP headquarters at Chameli House at Topkhana Road today.

He said that the meeting will finalise the 'Dhaka declaration' today and consider the main agenda includes setting up of a regular ministerial forum on the rural development

for the Asia-Pacific, enlistment of new members of CIRDAP mobilisation of additional donor support for the organisation's programme and establishment of a permanent complex of CIRDAP.

He said the first session heard the country reports from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam. They were followed by statements from FAO and Japan, the two main contributors to CIRDAP fund, since it was set up in 1979.

Japan has so far provided 1.7 million dollars to CIRDAP, Shamsul Huq said.

Besides the representatives of World Bank, World Food Organisation, International Labour Organisation and the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNDP presented their statements.

He said that statements from Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), ILO and Executive Director of ESCAP were also read out at the meeting yesterday.

Delegates' Speeches Reported

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 9 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Shah Moazzem Hossain yesterday described rural development as the key to successful national development for Bangladesh in the context of its structure of economy, distribution of population and the development potential, reports BSS.

He said as 85 per cent people of Bangladesh live in rural areas, rural development in this country is synonymous with national development.

Speaking as Chairman at the inaugural session of the first ministerial level meeting of CIRDAP on rural development, Shah Moazzem said focus has to be provided on productive employment and improvement of the living condition of rural poor, if we want to make development plans meaningful and successful.

Shah Moazzem said despite manifold efforts made so far, rural areas in Bangladesh conti-

nue to present a grim picture in terms of various problems like landlessness, unemployment, illiteracy and malnutrition. He said to overcome these shortcomings, a massive programme has been launched for mitigation of rural poverty.

NEPALESE MINISTER

Nepalese Minister for Panchayat and Local Government Pashupati Shamsheer J. B. Rana stressed the need for further collaboration among the countries of Asia and Pacific region to accelerate efforts for eradication of poverty.

Addressing the inaugural session Mr. Pashupati said rural poverty remains not only a common problem for us but is also, for many of us, the major problem of development.

The Nepalese Minister said, "We cannot claim success in the parameter of development until and unless we carry the fruits of development to those living in misery and deprivation in the countryside, and until and unless

we make the rural poor active participants in the programmes that will provide them with adequate minimum basic amenities of life.

He felt that the penury of rural areas could not be alleviated merely by providing outside aid. Through the process, he said, an impulse for self-generating development must be created in the communities themselves, broaden their horizon and breed confidence in them so that they could rise from misery of ages. Only by such a match between development and political strategies we could reach an enduring solution, he said.

Nepal is the current Chairman of the Governing Council of the CIRDAP.

The Nepalese Minister said it was noteworthy that in carrying out its mandate the CIRDAP had tried to focus its attention on the development of poor and disadvantaged people of the rural areas.

He said the contribution of the centre had been recognised by the member countries, U. N. agencies and the donor countries. With the financial assistance of Japan, the centre was taking up a project to study the impact of completed projects in the member countries, he said.

Mr Pashupati informed the meeting that Nepal had been participating in a number of research action research training and documentation activities of CIRDAP. The Agricultural Project Services (APROSE) of Nepal is the main agency for implementing CIRDAP's programme in the country and in disseminating the latest information and findings generated by CIRDAP, he said adding, the Central Panchayat Training Institute of Nepal was also collaborating in a number of CIRDAP study projects.

Referring to the rural development programmes of his country he said Nepal had nurtured a profound faith in the participation of people in their development. He have learnt that well-meaning administrators or foreign consultants could not by themselves create a self-sustaining rural development process, he said.

The Nepalese Minister thanked the Bangladesh government for providing physical facilities to CIRDAP and expressed the hope that it would continue to receive generous support from the host government.

He also appealed to other member countries, non-member countries of the region, donor countries and other agencies to extend all possible support to the centre in expanding its services and in establishing a permanent complex.

MALAYSIAN MINISTER

Rural development is the key to national development for the developing countries of Asia, the Malaysian Minister for Agriculture Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid said here yesterday.

Addressing the Inaugural session the Malaysian minister said some 70 to 80 per cent of Asian people lived in the rural areas.

Therefore, he said, for us in Asia when 'we talk of development, we primarily talk of rural development.'

Mr. Junid said the development of rural areas and the eradication of rural poverty to bring about an all round improvement in the quality of life of the vast majority of people who resided in the rural areas was a must.

Malaysia is the Vice Chairman of CIRDAP Government Council.

Mr. Junid said rural development in the Malaysian context, as in other developing countries, was inextricably linked with agriculture. Despite the inherent multisectoral nature of rural development, the agriculture sector continued to occupy central position in the development of rural areas, he said.

He said the basic objective of rural development of Malaysia was to improve the economic and social well-being of the rural population and to redress the economic imbalance between urban and rural areas. Mr Junid said this was effected through agricultural development and the provision of wideranging public services such as education, health, electricity and water supply.

CIRDAP DIRECTOR

The first ever ministerial meeting on rural development in Asia-Pacific region is being held with the objective of providing the highest authorities in CIRDAP member countries and other countries of the region with a forum to take stock of the rural development scenario in the region. Director of the Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) Mr A. T. M. Shamsul Huq said.

Addressing the inaugural session of the meeting Mr Huq said the other objective of the meeting was to exchange views and ideas and to provide the needed support to CIRDAP through expression of their solidarity and political commitment in favour of the poverty stricken rural masses of this region.

The CIRDAP Director said the major issues to be considered by the meeting included settling up of a regular ministerial forum on rural development for the Asia-Pacific region, enlistment of new members of CIRDAP, mobilisation of additional donor support for CIRDAP programme of work and establishment of a permanent complex for the centre.

Dwelling on the activities of the centre, Mr Huq said the main programme of activities of CIRDAP, based on priority areas determined by the Governing Council, were carried out through its research, action research training and documentation and information division. CIRDAP has so far completed 23 research, one action research, 25 training and five documentation projects, he said.

Mr. Huq said CIRDAP had now 11 members—six from South-East Asia and five from South Asia. He said a number of non-member countries of the Asia-Pacific region including Afghanistan, Bhutan and the People's Republic of China, Maldives, Republic of Korea, Tonga and Western Samoa had also been taking part in its activities.

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 10 Apr 87 pp 1, 10

[Text]

The two-day Asia-Pacific ministerial meeting on rural development concluded in Dhaka on Thursday with a broad consensus among the participants to share views and experience and strengthen efforts for alleviation of rural poverty.

The Dhaka declaration, adopted in the meeting, stressed the need for urgent, determined and realistic action to rescue the teeming millions in rural Asia and the Pacific from crippling poverty, hunger, sickness and ignorance. It appreciated the work being done by the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) to assist national action and to promote regional cooperation for the alleviation of rural poverty through peoples participation.

Bangladesh Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Shah Moazzem Hossain in his capacity as Chairman of the meeting told a Press conference that the participants in the first ever ministerial meet on rural development in Asia and the Pacific had demonstrated strong political resolve to pursue effective moves for rural poverty alleviation. The post-meeting Press conference was attended by Mr. Wimala Kanauagara, Sri Lankan Minister for Rural Development and Mr. Ramnand Yadav, Indian Minister of State for Rural Development. Mr. A.T.M. Shamsul Huq, Director, CIRDAP, was also present.

The Dhaka meeting on rural development in Asia and the Pacific was joined by nine ministers from seven CIRDAP member countries, high level delegation from eight other countries and 19 international and regional organisations.

Shah Moazzem Hossain told the newsmen that the meeting took a positive and satisfactory note of the Director's report on CIRDAP activities and the state of the Art on Integrated Rural Development in Asia-Pacific. Strong support was assured by the participants to CIRDAP to "move ahead in an even more sturdy base towards the agreed goals". The representatives of donor countries and agencies like

FAO, Japan, ADB, CIDA, Commonwealth Secretariat, EDI of the World Bank, ESCAP, ILO, WFP, UNFPA and UNDP reiterated the commitment of their respective organisations to facilitate and strengthen the efforts of CIRDAP towards integrated rural development, he said. The meeting, he added, urged the donors and international organisations to step their support to the programme and activities of CIRDAP.

The Minister observed that the participants in the meeting noted with "deep sense of appreciation" the goodwill gesture of the Government of Bangladesh for offering "Chameli House" as permanent complex for CIRDAP. About support from the CMCs for construction of the complex, he said that the delegates to the meeting agreed to take up the issue with their respective governments.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka declaration adopted at the meeting stated that the fundamental purpose of development is individual and social betterment, development of endogenous capabilities and improvement of the living standard of all people in particular the rural poor. The Ministers noted in the declaration that past development efforts and programmes had not largely succeeded in benefiting adequately the rural people and had contributed to urban-rural imbalance, thereby, in some cases accentuating poverty, hunger and malnutrition among them.

The Ministers reaffirmed that the rural development is central to national development and a fundamental process for political, social, economic and institutional transformation of agrarian societies. They urged the governments to introduce positive bias in favour of rural development in their national plans and programmes and provide incentives for increase in investment for generation of gainful employment and income through positive activities in rural areas. They stressed the need for conscious and active involvement of the rural population in development process.

More on Dhaka Declaration

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 10 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Ministers and officials from eleven of the world's poorest nations in Asia yesterday ended their two-day meeting, adopting 'Dhaka Declaration,' with a strong pledge to pull their resources to improve the condition of their rural havenots.

International donor and development agencies like the World Bank, FAO, UN bodies and Commonwealth Secretariat, also made similar commitment at the meeting, organised jointly by Bangladesh Government and the Centre for Integrated Rural Development in Asia-Pacific (CIRDAP).

The CIRDAP groups Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos and Philippines. The organisation was founded in 1979 with assistance from Japan, FAO and other international aid agencies to launch integrated rural development programme to improve the lot of the rural poor.

Nine ministers from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia attended the meeting, inaugurated by President Hussain Mohammad Ershad on Wednesday. High level delegates from eight nations, including members and non-members and 19 organisations, both regional and international bodies also attended the conference.

The meeting also decided to hold ministerial meetings "as and when necessary" to strengthen rural development activities at both national and regional levels on a sustained basis, the Dhaka Declaration said.

The next such meeting will be held in Islamabad, in December this year, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Bangladesh Minister for Local Government and Rural Development who chaired the two-day meeting, told newsmen at the end of the conference last evening.

India's Minister of state for Rural Development Ramananda Yadav and Sri Lanka's Minister for Rural Development Madama Wimala Kannangara were also present at the news conference.

President Hussain Mohammad Ershad also laid the foundation of a permanent headquarters of the Dhaka-based CIRDAP at the city centre yesterday afternoon.

The Dhaka declaration underscored the significance of the first ever ministerial meeting "solely devoted to rural development and expressed their conviction that such expression of political will and reiteration of commitment to rural development at high policy level would go a long way in improving the quality of life of the rural poor."

Warning that failure to improve the condition of the rural masses and uneven development between rural and urban areas would cause social tension and instability, the ministerial meeting noted that it would "adversely affect the process of socio-economic development." They recognised that "the struggle of millions of the rural poor living below the margins of human existence to survive is of great consequence to peace and stability of the world".

Stressing that the rural people should be rescued from "crippling poverty" the meeting felt that maximum efforts should be made to mobilize and use productively domestic resources for rural development through people's participation.

The ministers believed that rural development would also require decentralisation for evolving an effective two-way process between Government and people in decision making and improvement in the quality of development administration.

They also reaffirmed that economic growth with equity through people's participation was the basic element for the alleviation of rural poverty and emphasised that access to productive resources by the rural poor was of paramount importance.

Recognising villages as the basic socio-economic units they also called for focussing attention to participation of people's organisations, including workers associations and cooperatives

at decision making levels. They also called for paying attention to the need of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and women.

The ministers reaffirmed that agrarian reform was an essential and often crucial component of rural development and observed that "sustained improvement of the rural areas, requires full and equitable access by the rural poor to land; water and other resources."

They opined that the primary responsibility for rural development rests with individual governments and emphasised that a sustained and effective programme requires strong political commitment.

The ministers expressed the hope that the global economic climate would become more conducive to greater flow of resources through trade, aid and technical assistance to developing countries for accelerated rural development.

They also urged the countries of Asia and the Pacific to pursue individually and collectively the objective of alleviation of rural poverty to ensure socio-political stability of their countries as well as the region.

Answering a number of questions Shah Moazzem Hossain, assisted by Director of CIRDAP A. T. M. Shamsul Huq said that the member nations have pledged to strengthen the CIRDAP and the donors have also made similar commitments.

He said that conclusion of CIRDAP's first ministerial meeting on rural development was a historic occasion.

He said that the 'Dhaka Declaration' was also historic because it took into cognizance the issues relating to rural development and formulated a strategy for improving the lifestyle of the vast majority of people in Asia and Pacific who lives in the villages.

He said that the new head-quarter complex with its land and building would cost about three million dollars. Besides Bangladesh's contribution we also expect other donor members would contribute.

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CSO: 4600/1595

TOP LEVEL CHANGES UNDERWAY IN MISSIONS ABROAD

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 31 Mar 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

A series of top level changes in Bangladesh's diplomatic missions abroad are underway, it is gathered reliably.

Following the government's decision to close down the Bangladesh Mission in Kenya, Nairobi, which happens to be our only diplomatic outpost in East Africa High Commissioner Abdul Momen Chowdhery has been transferred to Libya as Ambassador of Bangladesh. The post of ambassador in Tripoli has been lying vacant for quite some time.

HARARE

Bangladesh High Commissioner in Harare, Zimbabwe, Mr. S.M. Hossain will be going to London as Deputy High Commissioner. He had served our London Mission before as First Secretary, Labour, before his induction in the foreign service. The present Deputy High Commissioner in London, Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, is learnt to have been appointed Ambassador to Senegal. The post had fallen vacant following appointment of Brigadier Nuruzzaman as High Commissioner to Canada.

THAILAND

Mr. A.H.S. Ataul Karim, a former Foreign Secretary and now Permanent Representative to UN offices in Geneva, will be going to Thailand as Ambassador, having served in Geneva for about three years.

Mr. Ataul Karim will be replaced by Mr. Waliur Rahman presently Bangladesh Ambassador to Italy. Mr. Waliur Rahman had joined his present position less than a year ago. Mr. Mohsin currently Ambassador in Bangkok, is under order of transfer to the headquarters in Dhaka.

Major General Anwar Hossain is expected to be appointed Ambassador to Italy.

The services of General Hossain have been placed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Informed sources pointed out that with the closure of the Bangladesh missions in Zimbabwe and Kenya, Bangladesh will have no mission in black Africa save in francophone Senegal.

Sources said that the closure of the Bangladesh Mission at Harare was rather curious because it came at a time when Zimbabwe had been elected current Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement of which Bangladesh is an active member.

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CSO: 4600/1599

PAPER REPORTS ERSHAD MESSAGE ON INDEPENDENCE DAY

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 26 Mar 87 pp 1, 12

[Text]

President Hussain Muhammad Ershad has called for taking a pledge to work devotedly on the basis of a strong national unity to build "our country as we have dreamt," reports BSS.

In a message on the eve of Independence and National Day, the President said to achieve this objective we need self-sacrifice, sincerity, hard work and love for people and the country as well as maintenance of peaceful atmosphere and political stability.

He said "I firmly believe that we have tremendous possibilities. Our land is fertile and we have enough water resources. Over and above we have men of initiatives. If we can make a proper coordination between these three resources. I believe that the golden door of progress and prosperity will be opened to us."

President Ershad conveyed his felicitations to the fellow countrymen on this auspicious occasion of the sixteenth anniversary of the Independence Day and prayed for the continued happiness, success and prosperity of people.

The President said the independence did not come as a gift, rather, we have snatched the blood stained sun of our flag of independence by making unlimited sacrifices. "I remember with gratitude on my own behalf and on behalf of the nation the supreme sacrifices of the brave Shaheedhs of the great War of Independence."

Paying deep respect to the memory of the Shaheedhs, he said the Independence Day is not only a day for ceremonial festivity but also a day for taking vow to materialise the

dreams of the martyrs. It is the day for taking pledge to make the independence meaningful to all, he pointed out.

President Ershad said the nation has been making relentless endeavours to preserve the hard earned independence and sovereignty of the country, to ensure economic growth and social justice with a view to improving the standard of living of the people by removing poverty and to achieve an honourable position in the community of nations. "We are determined to build an exploitation free new Bangladesh," he said.

The President said the continued progress during the last five years has generated a new enthusiasm in all spheres of national life. This he said, has created a new chapter and provided strength in "our development activities."

He said an elected Government and an elected Parliament have been functioning in the country while the peoples representatives have been working as heads of the decentralised administration under the newly-introduced Upazila system. He said the judiciary has reached the door steps of people and we are really proud of the reforms so far effected and of our democratic tradition.

President Ershad said today a silent revolution has been going on in the country through development activities to free the nation from poverty. He said, it has been possible to halt the expansion of the poverty line as the growth rates in both government and private sectors have been doubled.

The President said as a result of the implementation of the progressive land reforms policy, lands are being distributed among landless farmers. The achievement of self-sufficiency in food production is almost in our reach today, he said.

He said following the formulation and implementation of the realistic industrial policy, the industrial sector has been rejuvenated. A favourable climate has been created in the investment sector since we have given priority to the private sector, he said.

President Ershad said the declared policy of the present government is to ensure education and medicare for all by the year 2000. Our drug policy has been acclaimed all over the world, he said adding we have built up medicare infrastructure even in the farthest corner of the country.

The President said "our efforts to control the population boom has received international recognition. We have put emphasis on the use of modern technology for quick de-

velopment." He said with a view to achieving this objective, we are building a communication and power network.

He said Bangladesh has a huge reserve of natural gas and with the infinite mercy of Almighty Allah we have struck oil in Bangladesh very recently.

President Ershad said the image of Bangladesh in the international arena has brightened. He said Bangladesh is the current President of the United Nations General Assembly and played a pioneering role in establishing the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the first Secretary General of the SAARC has been appointed from Bangladesh.

He said Bangladesh has been playing its due role in different international forums including the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and the Commonwealth.

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CSO: 4600/1596

SUPREME COURT HEAD INTERVIEWED ON STATUS OF COURT

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 2 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Mr. Shamsul Huq Chowdhury, President-elect of Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association, while talking to this correspondent, said on Wednesday that the struggle for rule of law will continue more vigorously till the Supreme Court of Bangladesh is fully allowed to work under the frame work of Bangladesh Constitution.

He was talking to this correspondent after his election as President of the Supreme Court Bar Association for the fifth time.

Mr. Shamsul Huq Chowdhury deprecated what he said the attempt of the Chief Executive to tame 'the highest judiciary'. He said that the members of the Bar would not allow any interference by the Executive in the administration of justice.

He alleged that the Chief Justice Mr. F.K.M.A. Munim has not only violated Article 100 of the Constitution, but has also violated his oath of office taken under the Constitution. He was critical of the Chief Justice for carrying out the anti constitutional order of the Chief Executive in maintaining the Benches in different districts of the

country. He was equally critical of the Chief Executive for his alleged act of interference in the administration of justice. He said that the members of the Association have been fighting for the supremacy of the judiciary and for the Rule of law in the country.

Mr. Chowdhury alleged that the present Government wants a loyal judiciary. He pointed out that a sitting Judge is appointed as Secretary of the Ministry of Law in violation of Article 99 of the Constitution. He said Secretary, Ministry of Law, is maintaining liaison between the executive and the judiciary. He is equally responsible for the mess in the judiciary, he alleged.

He said that a person cannot keep his office as a Judge maintaining at the same time his position as the chief of a Ministry under the Executive. He opined that this is a clear violation of Article 99. He pointed out that the Constitution is founded on a balance of powers amongst different organs of the state viz., the executive, and the judiciary. He demanded that no judge should be appointed elsewhere in violation of Article 99 of the Constitution.

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CSO: 4600/1601

MINISTER INTERVIEWED ON ELECTION POSSIBILITIES

Original Article

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 29 Mar 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Education Minister Mr. Mahbubur Rahman yesterday ruled out possibilities of mid-term polls or any change in the form of the Government.

In an interview with the The New Nation at his Secretariat chamber, the Education Minister said the Government of H.M. Ershad has been elected for a five-year term; so, during this period everybody should cooperate with the Government without impeding the functioning of the government to ensure stability and pace of development in the country. Political aspirants should prepare themselves for the next election through peaceful and constitutional means.

Mr Mahubur Rahman said there was no scope for controversy about the present form of government because it was a settled issue.

As many as three presidential elections had been held under the present form of the constitution, and, before that, two referendums, one in 1985 and the other during the time of late President Ziaur Rahman were held on the issue. In this context he said the present form of government was not the brainchild of President Ershad. It was first introduced through the proclamation of independence at Mujibnagar in 1971 wherein late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was declared President and all executive powers were vested in the President.

Paying rich tributes to contribution of President Ershad and the Armed Forces for maintaining stability and continuity of the constitution in the country, Mr Mahbubur Rahman said that the nation would always recall their role during 1971 and through the years 1982 to 1986 with gratitude. He said that the role of the Armed Forces during the martial law period (1982-86) was more glorious than the role it played during the period August 1975 to February 1979, in matters of nation building activities. During the later period of martial law rule shining examples of reorganisation and other reformative and creative works were set. Compared to that during the period between August 1975 and February 1979, the words "Martial Law" was used more for activities other than nation building works.

In this context, he said martial law was first promulgated in the country in October 1958 by a civilian. Later in August 1975 another civilian proclaimed martial law. As the established definition of martial law is the "will of the armed forces," those two civilians had to quit power shortly, he pointed out.

Mr Rahman said that the Government formed with the elements in August 20, 1975 were mostly Awami Leaguers. Later, however, a civilian President proclaimed himself as the Chief Martial Law Administrator and this

sequence of martial law continued till February 1979.

He said President Ershad and the Armed Forces had no desire to take over power to meet their personal or political ambition. They did not proclaim martial law. Had they any ambition to grab power they could have done it soon after the "tragic incident at Chittagong and the abortive coup in May 1981." President Ershad and the members of the Armed Forces were loyal to the then constitutional government and the President. Although there were people who had advised him to take over power immediately, he said.

Mr Rahman said, later President Ershad and the Armed Forces extended all support and cooperation for holding of a presidential election in the country in the interest of the continuity of the constitutional government. They even extended all cooperation at the time of bringing about the sixth amendment to the constitution enabling Justice Satter to contest the election, he said.

Mahbubur Rahman said that the nomination of former President Justice Abdus Sattar for the presidential election at first was not consistent with the requirement of the constitution. "I first identified this inconsistency and brought it to the notice of the then Chief of Army Staff Lt. General Ershad, the then Chief of General Staff Major General Nooruddin Khan and DG ISI Mr Hakim

on the same day I informed Justice Sattar about it and requested him to effect necessary amendment to the constitution to overcome the shortcoming.

He said that late President Ziaur Rahman would not have been able to run for presidency for the second term without the sixth amendment to the constitution. As per the constitutional requirement he would have been compelled to step down from the office of profit to qualify for the presidency for the second time, had there been no sixth amendment.

Mr Rahman said that President Ershad too then Chief of Army Staff earnestly desired to see President Sattar get elected as President without

any legal shortcoming because he wanted the continuity of the constitutional rule and stability in the country. So he began taking steps to create a democratic atmosphere in the country and arranged holding of dialogues with leaders of all prominent political parties. "I also had the opportunity to play a role at that time," he said.

Mr. Rahman said that no country could run permanently without politics, democracy and constitution. At times it may be necessary to keep them suspended. President Ershad believes in this philosophy, he said.

Before transition to democracy President Ershad and the 'armed forces' aim was to estab-

lish the on going civilian administration, decentralisation of state power and wealth to activate the economy to free the nation from unbearable losses incurred in the nationalised industries, making of plans on priority basis and their implementation in time. On the basis of these objectives the 18-point plan was formulated and "I also tried to contribute something to that end," he said.

Mr. Rahman said, so far as I know, President Ershad had no desire to contest the presidential election as a party candidate. For this reason Justice Ahsanuddin was made convenor of Janodal "and I myself requested Justice Ahsanuddin to take over the responsibility," he said.

Clarification by Newspaper

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 30 Mar 87 p 8

[Text]

The Education Minister Janab Mahbubur Rahman in course of the interview published yesterday in The New Nation said with reference to type of Government that presidential system of government is a settled issue, and "to my knowledge the government had not yet taken any decision to unsettle any settled issue."

The Minister did not make any comment on election to the parliament.

Pointing to election of President Ershad the Minister said that to my knowledge, initially the President had no intention to become head of a political party or contest election as a party candidate to continue to be in power. Subsequently, responding to the call of the people and in greater national interest he was pleased to agree to be presidential candidate in the last election and also to be the Chairman of the Jatiya Party.

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CSO: 4600/1597

NEED FOR OVERHAUL OF PLANNING COMMISSION SEEN

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 2 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Planning Commission's preoccupation with minor project details has impaired its role as the country's key economic watchdog. The vital needs to ensure that economic policies are consistent with the public expenditure programme and projects conform to national priorities are neglected in the process.

The Commission's capacity to undertake economic analysis and to formulate and monitor development strategy is undermined by its existing organisational structure at the top. At present, only one of the five Planning Commission members and none of the five division chiefs is an economist.

Admittedly, a development planning body clearly requires a variety of analytical perspective in addition to economics. But, the disciplinary mix at the senior levels of the planning has been inappropriate.

The Commission's original pivotal importance and position in development planning have been downgraded. The status of its members has been reduced from Ministers of State to ministerial secretaries. The other senior staff members of the Commission also enjoy now a correspondingly lowered status.

The current approved staffing of the Commission is smaller than at its inception in 1972. Its direct control over foreign aid, the key input in the country's development programme, was transferred earlier to External Resources Division (ERD) under the Ministry of Finance. The monitoring of development projects was vested on the Implementation,

Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED). The proliferation of development institutions has not, however, led to much of any improved performance under the mid-term development plan.

The staffing levels and patterns within the Planning Commission underwent significant changes over the recent years. Many of the foreign-trained economists originally attracted to the Commission resigned. Economists for the Planning Commission are now hired not directly but through the Public Service Commission. Individuals with technical training rather than trained economists dominate its senior positions.

The World Bank in its latest report on the economic situation in Bangladesh has meanwhile elaborately dealt with the major weaknesses of the planning process and development administration with particular focus on the Planning Commission. The Bank has strongly felt that Bangladesh needs "a strong and well-staffed Planning Commission." It has suggested that the Commission should over the coming years "devote less time and attention to detailed project approvals ensuring only that the project is in conformity with national priorities." According to the Bank, more time, given by the Planning Commission to the formulation and monitoring of development strategy and for broader policy issues, would make it possible on its part to take a stronger leadership role in setting the agenda and providing analysis and

recommendations for National Economic Council (NEC) and Executive Committee of National Economy Council (ECNEC). For this upgraded role, the Commission's capacity to undertake economic analysis, the Bank observes, will require to be strengthened first. The World Bank has also recommended for improving the planning capacity of the implementing agencies and ministries.

Bureaucratic impediments

Bureaucratic impediments rather than substantive issues are mainly responsible for long delays in preparation of development projects. Many staff of the Planning Commission lack training in project analysis and are more comfortable focusing on specific details like personnel, vehicles, equipment and technical assistance, foreign training facilities etc. This is done at times to the neglect of important issues such as project design, technology choice, economic and financial viability, sectoral content, regional planning and relationship to other projects and programmes.

The details of such operational lapses have been enumerated by the World Bank. A recent review by the Planning Commission itself has shown that delays in project approval are common at each step of the multi-tier sanctioning process. The Government's guidelines for proces-

sing development projects each involving investment outlay of Taka two crores and above within six or seven months time are almost never adhered to and processing periods of more than twice that long are normal.

The delays in the approval and at times, revision of Project Proformas (PPs), coupled with under-budgeting of Taka funds for approved projects, have led to slow implementation performance. In addition, land acquisition difficulties, delays in the appointment of key project staff, procurement and consultant recruitment problems, arbitrary government directives, project management constraints etc. have continued to plague the overall development performance in the public sector. This has, in turn, caused the targets of mid-term development plans to remain unmet.

Some insiders in the Planning Commission have meanwhile stressed that the political leadership must show proper regard for the planning process for the success of any development plan. According to them, lack of planning discipline is mainly the outcome of expediency on the part of national leadership. They maintain that once the plan and its broad development strategy are approved by the Government at its highest political level, the singular most important thing is to ensure that public expenditure programmes and policies are made in conformity with that strategy.

/9317

CSO: 4600/1601

CALL FOR FORMATION OF INTERIM GOVERNMENT REPORTED

Text of Statement

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 30 Mar 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Thirty one leading intellectuals of the country have called for setting up, under the Constitution, an interim government composed of non-party men of unimpeachable honesty and integrity to overcome the present 'despondent situation'.

In a joint statement yesterday, they said the nation was passing through a serious crisis affecting all spheres of life and appealed to all sections of the people to unite for the establishment of a democratic and progressive society.

"A deep sense of frustration prevails in the political arena, widespread poverty and inequality mark the economic scene, anarchy is widespread in the administration, undesirable atmosphere is prevalent in the educational field and social life characterised by extreme despair and indiscipline", the statement said.

The intellectuals said the primary task of the proposed interim government would be to restore the universal democratic rights and to arrange for a violence-free election within the shortest possible time. It would also take measures to free politics from violence and "keep the armed forces above politics".

They appealed to all sections of the people to move unitedly for creating a consensus. They emphasised the need for discussing with an open mind on a national level all the problems facing the nation today and

arriving at a wide consensus for solving those.

Narrating the situation prevailing in the country, they said almost all organisations and institutions were being systematically destroyed. Democratic process had been reduced to a farce. The prestige of the office of the President and the credibility of parliament had been eroded, they noted.

The statement said owing to the failure to ensure the independence of the judiciary, an anarchic situation had been created. The rule of law was ineffective. Conduct of the men in power bore eloquent testimony to their attempts to violate the Constitution.

Corruption and undemocratic practices had extended to the lowest level of the administration. A group of people were engaged in acquiring black money and transferring it abroad, the statement added.

The following is the text of the statement: We are passing through a serious crisis in Bangladesh today. It is affecting all spheres of our national life. A deep sense of frustration prevails in the political arena, widespread poverty and inequality mark the economic scene, anarchy is widespread in the administration, undesirable atmosphere is prevalent in the educational field and social life is characterised by extreme despair and indiscipline. What is even more alarming is the fact that almost all organisations are being systematic-

cally destroyed. Democratic process has been reduced to a farce. The prestige of the office of the President and the credibility of the National Assembly have been eroded. The commonman has been robbed of his fundamental right of voting which is so vital for democracy. Many doubt whether democratic principles and practices are followed even within the political parties. The string-pulling by the men in power and the political opportunism and the break-up of political parties which these cause are destroying the faith of the people in the democratic process.

The process of economic polarization has been accentuated. On the one hand, some people, having the patronage of the ruling power, are able to amass huge fortune. On the other hand, his patronage has prevented the growth of the so-called competitive economy and the entrepreneurs are unable to play their role effectively. In the present trend of the economy, the curse of poverty, unemployment and landlessness have increased. Our economy is dependent on foreign aid, but even here priorities are not being determined on the basis of the needs of the people. The discipline of the planning process is being flouted frequently. Aid is not reaching the commonman. Instead, it is helping a group of people engaged in unproductive activities acquire black money and transfer it abroad thereby caus-

ing a flight of capital. Inequality is increasing in society—inequality between the urban and rural areas, between the social classes, between men and women. While one class of people is getting used to a life style comparable to that in a developed nation, the great majority is being deprived of even the basic necessities of life. This disparity prevents achievement of national cohesion.

Long established norms and social values are being disrupted and neither the family nor any other institution can prevent anti-social activities. A kind of senseless violence continues to endanger peace and social order. The rule of law which could save the people from this situation is not effective today. The conduct of the men in power bears eloquent testimony to their attempts to violate the constitution.

In the administrative field, neutrality is absent and it has become dangerous to express one's opinion freely. The nature and character of civil administration have been distorted to a great extent because of their subservience to Martial Law for a long time and administrators are required to satisfy the whims of men in power rather than serve the interest of the people. In the name of administrative decentralization which is desirable, power of the central government has been skillfully expanded to a great extent and, in the process, corruption and undemocratic practices have been extended to the lowest level of administrative machinery. The judiciary has lost much of its prestige due to the continued existence of Martial Law. Because of the failure to ensure the independence of the judiciary, an anarchic situation has been created.

An education system befitting an independent nation could not be introduced and no attempt has been made to put into practice the recommendations of the Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission. The rate of literacy and enrolment in primary education have failed to keep pace with the growth of population. Inequality in education has also sharpened due to the growth of various types of private institutions in the cities catering to the urban upper classes and the maintenance of expensive elitist institutions from the public exchequer. Education has not been adjusted to our needs while its standard has also fallen. The wastage of time and lack of discipline seen

in the centres of higher education are matters of grave concern for everyone. These institutions are not in reality accountable to the society. The students, teachers and guardians today suffer from a sense of frustration.

Proposals, again, are being advanced to make the army share political power. We feel that it would not be beneficial to make it possible for the army to dabble in politics by amending the Constitution under any circumstances. In the overall interest of the country, we would like to see the armed forces remain above politics.

It is necessary for the nation to free itself from the despondent situation we are passing through today. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss with an open mind on a national level all the problems facing us and to arrive at a wide consensus for solving them. We call upon the conscious citizens of the country to unitedly move forward to create such a consensus.

Freedom from the present anarchy lies in the establishment of an unfettered democracy. It is necessary to reestablish the full democratic spirit of the Constitution in order to free the country from the farcical democratic process which has been enforced by effectively eliminating the commonman's right to vote. It would be helpful to attain this goal by settling up under the Constitution an interim government composed of non-party men of unimpeachable honesty and integrity. The primary task of such a government would be to reestablish the universal democratic rights and to arrange for a violence-free election within the shortest possible time. The representatives will be elected on political party basis. The representatives of the people will be required to put an end to the undemocratic features that have entered the economic, political and administrative fields by means of Constitutional amendments. They will also take measures to free politics from violence and keep the armed forces above politics. None of the members of the non-party interim government will contest the elections. They should not also be members of any political party. We feel that this is the only way to get out of our present predicament.

We appeal to all sections of the people of the country to join hands for the establish-

ment of a democratic and progressive society in Bangladesh.

The signatories to the statement are: Abdur Razzaq, National Professor, Kamaluddin Hossain, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court, Debesh Chandra Bhattacharjee, former Justice, Supreme Court, Begum Sofia Kamal, President, Mahila Parishad, Dr. Azizur Rahman Mallick, former Vice-Chancellor, ambassador and minister of finance, Dr. Nilima Ibrahim Professor and former Director General Bangla Academy, Dr. Khan Sarwar Murshid, former Vice-Chancellor, ambassador and Asstt Secretary General, Commonwealth Secretariat, Zillur Rahman Siddique, Professor and former Vice-Chancellor, A. K. M. Ahsan, former Secretary to the Government and Member, Planning Commission, Sanaul Huq, former Secretary to the Government and ambassador, Abdul Khaleque, former Inspector General of Police and Secretary to the Government, A. B. M. G. Kibria, former Inspector General of Police and ambassador, Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Barrister-at-Law and advocate, Supreme Court, Rafiqul Huq, Barrister-at-Law and advocate, Supreme Court, Khondakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed, advocate, Supreme Court, Dr. Abul Kashem, former President, Bangladesh Medical Association, Dr. Zahirul Huq Professor and former Dean, BUET, Kabir Chowdhury professor, Sardar Fazlul Karim, Professor, Dhaka University, Dr. A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed Professor, Dr. Iqbal Mahmud Professor, Dr. Sanjida Khatun Professor, Dhaka University and singer, Dr. Anisuzzaman Professor, Dhaka University, Dr. A. M. Harunur Rashid Professor, Dhaka University, Kamrul Hasan, Painter, Shamsur Rahman Poet and journalist, Fayed Ahmed, writer and journalist, Dr. Muzaffar Ahmed Professor, Dhaka University and president, Bangladesh Economic Association and former Adviser to the President, Govt of Bangladesh, Dr. Mosharraf Hossain Professor, Dhaka University and former Member, Planning Commission, Mainul Hossain, Barrister-at-Law, Advocate, Supreme Court, Chairman, Board of Editors, Ittefaq and New Nation, Dr. Fasih Uddin Mahtab Engineer, former Minister of Planning and Finance.

Criticism from Jatiya Official

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 31 Mar 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Mr. Zafar Imam, Joint Secretary General, Jatiya Party, on Monday night castigated the statement of 31 intellectuals describing it as irrelevant and untenable, reports BSS.

In a statement, Mr. Imam termed their contention as an expression of their inferiority complex "which amounts to intellectual corruption." At a time when the whole nation was pressing ahead with a view to improving the socio-economic condition of the masses and when the country was heading for a promising future the joint statement of the 31 intellectuals was a manifestation of a "heinous attempt and imprudence" he maintained.

Mr. Imam, who is also the Minister for Jute, wanted to know from the 31 intellectuals what they actually doing just after the liberation of the country when killing, hijacking, looting and corruption became the order of the day. Why these people were silent before 1982 when democracy was slaughtered, 1975 famine claimed thousands of lives and corruption engulfed the whole nation, he asked.

Mr. Imam said that their uncalled for statement had frustrated all. This statement can be compared with the one that was issued by the so-called intellectuals in favour of the occupation forces during the War of Liberation in 1971. In fact, the statement of the 31 intellectuals defeated the intransigences and conspiracy hatched by the so-called intellectuals in 1971, he stressed.

He said that the so-called statement of the 31 intellectuals had no

relevance to the situation now obtaining in the country.

Listing the achievements of the present government headed by President Ershad, Mr. Imam noted that the President had decentralized the administration and at the same time ensured the development of 68,000 villages through the completion of upazila election. The President had also held all the national elections and redeemed his pledge by reviving the constitution, he said.

In this connection, the Jute Minister pointed out that the just concluded session Jatiya Sangsad continued for 61 days and passed 29 bills through the participation of both ruling and opposition parties. The members of parliament belonging to either side debated the presidential speech inside the House for long 41 hours, he added.

Mr. Zafar Imam said that Bangladesh Foreign Minister had been chosen as the President of the United Nations General Assembly, Country's Prime Minister had become the Vice-President of the non-aligned movement, the country had performed the role of the chairmanship of "Group of 77"—the country earned laurels in the international field.

Mr. Zafar Imam said that President Ershad was striving for greater national unity for the overall progress and prosperity of the nation and asked the opposition parties to overcome their meanness. He said that President was touring the nook and corner of the country to see for himself the conditions of the com-

mon people and alleviate their sufferings.

Mr. Zafar Imam said that the policies of the government had resulted in manifold development of the country and this could be felt in the commercial, industrial and other economic fields. He said law and order situation had also improved very much in the country today and an enthusiasm had been generated among the people to take the nation towards the path of progress and prosperity.

Mr. Imam said that many international conference such as SAARC, Group 77 and Investment Forum had taken place in Bangladesh and many heads of government and trade delegations had come to our country. The President of our country and trade delegations similarly visited many foreign countries and thus consolidated the bilateral ties with them, he said.

He noted that the Government was determined to reach the fruits of national independence to every house by forging national unity based on the spirit of the Liberation War. The Government was actually moving in the that direction throughout the implementation of a comprehensive programme, he said.

The Joint Secretary General of Jatiya Party further said that the country today enjoyed the freedom of the Press and freedom of expression and that the fundamental rights of the people were fully ensured. The present government had not changed anything of the revived constitution except increasing the retirement age of the judges, he said.

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 3 Apr 87 p 1

[Text]

The thirty-one eminent persons chose to ignore the offensive language used against them by Government leaders but restated in a statement issued on Thursday that their proposals were not in conflict with the constitution.

The signatories brought to focus the Article 55 of the Constitution and added it empowers an appointed person to discharge all the powers and functions of the President for an interim period.

They said if there were no provision for an interim government how could late Justice Abdus Sattar perform the functions of the President?

The signatories went on to remind the Government that Article 72 of the Constitution clearly provides for interim elections.

The statement said "In the greater interest of the country we have appealed to the people to save the nation from the politics of arms and anarchy and to re-establish constitutional and democratic politics".

Persons owning the statement hold the view that constitutional and democratic politics flourish with Government genuinely respectful to concepts of democracy. They have offered suggestions to free the country from politics of violence, anarchy and military rule in a constitutional manner. The signatories saw

no constitutional obstacles in forming a government voted for by the people and accountable to them by means of a free and fair election held under a non-party government.

The signatories are willing to furnish further constitutional advice on this issue.

They said those who are talking of elected institutions know it very well that National Assembly and presidential elections had earned notoriety at home and abroad as exercises in massive vote dacoity.

The signatories said they would not have come forward with their suggestions if the country would have been governed by the genuine representatives of the people.

Notable among those who have signed the statement are Prof. Abdur Razzaq, Kamaludding Hossain, Debesh Chandra Battacherjee, Sufia Kamal, Dr. A.R. Mallick, Dr. Nilima Ibrahim, Dr. Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof. Zillur Rahman Siddique, A.K.M. Ahsan, Sanaul Haq, Abdul Khaleque, A.B.M.G. Kibria, Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Kabir Chowdhury, Sarder Fazlul Karim, Dr. Salahuddin Ahmed, Dr. Iqbal Mahmud, Dr. Anizuzzaman, Kamrul Hasan, Shamsur Rahman, Fayez Ahmed, Dr. Muzaffar Ahmed, Dr. Mosharraf Hossain, Mainul Hossain and Dr. Fasihuddin Mahtab.

Achievements of Parliament Session

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 30 Mar 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Jatiya Sangsad which was prorogued on March 25 last after being in session for 41 days, easily the longest in the post-independent Bangladesh, enacted 18 legislations, heard 45 call attention notices and inconclusively discussed three adjournment motions.

The Bill for separating judiciary from executive was placed before the House but kept it pending. The Bill provoked adverse reaction in bureaucracy.

The question time which was not attached due importance and was discarded at the later stage of the session produced 1930 questions of which 1773 were answered by the Ministers.

There was a surfeit of call attention notices, 494 to be precise of which 111 were accepted and only 45 were discussed in the House. More than one call attention notices were included in the order of the day in clear violation of the rules of procedure.

There was also no scarcity of the privilege motions. Members in their anxiety to protect their interest brought 59 privilege motions including one against this paper. Speaker admitted 18 of them and referred back all to the Privilege Committee of the House.

The members had moved 158 adjournment motions of which only four were found technically suited for discussion in the House. Rest were rejected.

Of the eighteen Bills adopted by the House, only one was new and the rest were amended. The new Bill was on the establishment of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology at Sylhet.

The Jatiya Sangsad amended six Bills in one day substantially enhancing the wages and perks of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Ministers, Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Members of the Sangsad.

The total emoluments of the Members have risen to nearly eight thousand and each member will receive Tk. 51 thousand as arrear salary.

The salary of the Prime Minister has been raised to Tk. 8000 per month from Tk. 2200 in 1976. The Deputy Prime Ministers will receive a salary of Tk. 7000, Ministers Tk. 6000, State Ministers Tk. 5000 and Deputy Ministers Tk. 4000.

The Speakers salary has been raised to Tk. 8000 at par with the Prime Minister and Deputy Speaker will get Tk. 6000 at par with Ministers.

The Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina, will get Tk. 6000 and all the facilities enjoyed by the Ministers and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Mr. Abdul Malek Ukil will receive a salary of Tk. 5000 at par with State Minister plus all facilities enjoyed by them.

Wages and allowance of the President and the Vice-President have also been raised. President's pay has been raised to Tk. 10,000 from 2500 and that of the Vice-President to Tk. 8500. There has been substantial increase in the allowances of the President.

The Special Powers Act of 1974 enacted during Awami League regime has been amended to provide for severe punishment for smuggling and for sale and display of smuggled goods.

The Special Powers Act of 1974 provides the Government Sweeping authority to detain any person for six months without any trial.

The Special Powers Act was enacted with a view to safeguarding the sovereignty and defence of Bangladesh, for the maintenance of friendly relations with foreign countries, to prevent anything from harming security of state and maintenance of public order and safety, to prevent disruption of communal harmony, to prevent interference with the law and order situation, to maintain uninterrupted supply of essential items and to prevent provocation of alarm and fear among any section of the people.

Jatiya Sangsad also passed two Bills amending the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1958 and Civil Court Amendment Act of 1887.

Criminal law amended

The amendment of the Criminal Law Act provides for specification of the powers of the special judges, refixation of the time limit for investigation and revival of certain cases kept in abeyance. The time limit for investigation has been extended from 60 to 180 days. In the Civil Court Amendment Act, Munsiff has been redesignated as Assistant Judge.

A Bill raising the strength of the women ward commissioners of DMC from ten to twelve was also passed by the House. This has been done to ensure representation of women ward commissioner from all the police stations under Dhaka Municipal area. The name of Chalna port has been changed to Mongla Port by amending the Bill to dispel confusion about the name of the port abroad.

Two Bills on BSRS and BSB were also amended providing for public subscription of 49 per cent of their shares.

There has been a demand that the Jatiya Sangsad should be in session more frequently than before. Some legislators say Bangladesh must follow the pattern of Indian Lok Shava if not House of Commons.

JSD member Abdur Rab who created a lot of furor by demanding a mid-term poll has strongly suggested that the Sangsad should sit

for at least 200 days in a year, a suggestion that will have wide acceptance among the members.

Time was the biggest victim of the last session. There was not a single occasion when the House began its sitting on time. The delay ranged from 30 to 45 minutes thus wasting 20 hours of precious time during which a lot of business could be transacted.

Indifference to food situation

What surprised many was the total indifference of the House to the present food situation in the country. The Opposition made feeble attempt at raising the issue but was cornered by the Treasury Bench.

Many feel, that include members from the Treasury Bench, that there should have been a debate on agriculture, industry, population control and education.

Members feel that these issues could have been discussed by curtailing time on general discussion on President's address and also by utilising the time wasted by delayed start every day.

The treasury Bench's tendency to recall the past and Awami League's habit of beating the drum about the performance during their era often led to unnecessary disruptions in the proceedings of the House.

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CSO: 4600/1598

BANGLADESH COMMUNIST PARTY HOLDS FOURTH CONGRESS

Report on Opening Session

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 8 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

The fourth congress of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) began yesterday at the Engineers' Institution with the call for a national reawakening through unity of all classes and sections of people opposed to imperialism, comprador-bourgeoisie new rural vested quarters and remnants of jirdars and mahajans (money-lenders).

Presided over by CPB General Secretary Mohammad Farhad the inaugural session of the congress was addressed by the party's secretariat members Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Manzoorul Ahsan Khan and Mujahidul Islam, Selim Awarul League presidium member Abdus Samad Azad, Samyabadi Dal leader Mohammad Toaha, NAP convenor Syed Altaf Hossain, Gana Azadi League general secretary Abdus Samad and Baksal general secretary Abdus Razzak.

Mohammad Farhad said that the CPB considered completion of national democratic revolution as its revolutionary task at the present phase and in view of the country's socio-economic and political reality socialism could be reached through an interim phase.

He called upon all 'patriotic people' of the country, progressive Imams (priests) of mosques, different minority nationalities and communities and all "anti-imperialist" forces to come forward to shoulder the "patriotic responsibility" of bringing about the national democratic revolution.

He said that alongside his party's call for unity of "patriotic and progressive" forces it stressed the importance of fast flourishing and advancement of the "genuine progressive" forces. The CPB is eager to deepen its rapport and understanding with them, he added.

The CPB general secretary further said that his party did not belittle the importance and responsibility of preserving the current democratic unity.

He said that the parliament should be utilized to steer the movement on streets through continued understanding of the "15-party" (Eight-party) alliance.

He said that the membership strength of CPB had increased more than three times after the congress of 1980, leaders and workers belonging to other leftist parties had joined the CPB and the working masses were increasingly rallying themselves round the party.

He said that since the killing of Bangabandhu the 'imperialist' forces and their local agents had been conspiring to push the country into ever-deepening crisis and martial law was imposed frequently in their interests.

He said that the national defence forces built through the War of Liberation had been dragged in politics and consequently, the change of political power was effected through bullet, killing and coups not ballot and the country had fallen into clutches of 'international imperialism'.

In his address of welcome Saifuddin Ahmed Manik said, today 80 per cent of people live below the poverty line and 58 per cent below abject poverty. More than 60 per cent of the rural people are landless. Over 1.5 crore of people are unemployed. New industries are not coming up and there is aggravation of law and order situation.

He said that a move was underway to stop student politics and the government was also trying to black the activities of the political parties.

He said that Bangladesh had been included in the plan of new internationalism of "imperialism".

He said that the achievements and values of the War of Liberation were almost extinct today and the defeated anti-Independence forces were raising their heads again under the patronisation of the government.

The CPB leader said that for the first time the working class and all sections of toiling masses had participated in massive struggles in the recent years and a process of uprising of the rural proletariat and poor people, agricultural labourers and working peasants against class exploitation on small-scales and their solidarity with national political movements in a small way had begun.

He said that only an expanded and strong mass-based Marxist-Leninist party having an image could fill in the present political void prevailing in the country.

Awami League Presidium member Abdus Samad Azad a guest speaker at the CPB congress, said that the statement of 31 intellectuals had hit the government and hence the name of Shamsur Rahman, chief editor of the Dainik Bangla, had been dropped from its printer's line.

He said, "this government was not voted by the people. So we want to bring about the downfall of this government, make the parliament sovereign and keep the armed forces above politics".

Describing 'mass upsurge' as the only means to replace government he stressed the need for Unity of different political forces to establish democracy in the country and restore four principles of the state including Bangalee nationalism.

He welcomed the Soviet Union for helping Bangladesh in its War of Liberation.

Mohammad Toaha called for building a strong movement in the future through unity of the "leftist progressive" forces.

Abdur Razzak urged the CPB to play the leading role in uniting the "leftist progressive forces" to build an intensive mass movement aimed at replacing this government and resist-

ing the fundamentalist forces.

Syed Altaf Hossain said that the military rule was continuing in the country in the civilian garb and stressed the need for unity of 'all democratic and progressive' forces to carry on a struggle for economic emancipation alongside the movement for democracy. He expressed his party's support to the CPB's call for a national democratic revolution.

Earlier Mohammad Farhad moved a resolution of respect for ailing aged leader Moni Singh who was one of the founders of CPB and Manzoorul Ahsan Khan paid tribute to martyrs.

CPB leader Matlur Rahman read out messages to the party sent by Sandanista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua, People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea, United Workers' Party of Poland, Fedayeen (majority) of Iran, People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, Socialist Unity Party of New Zealand, People's Progressive Party of Guyana, Workers Party (Communist Party) of Sweden, Workers Party of Switzerland and Communist

parties of South Africa, Great Britain, France, Italy, Ethiopia, Columbia, Portugal, Indonesia, Canada, Egypt and Sri Lanka.

The inaugural session of the congress was attended by 14 foreign communist delegates representing the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Republic of Germany (GDR), Vietnam, Mongolia, Hungary, Palestine and a newspaper of Cyprus World Marxist Review. The leaders of different political parties and prominent individuals who attended the inaugural session of CPB congress included Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan Zohar, Tajuddin and Mozaffar Hussain Paltu of Awami League, Nirmal Sen of SKSD, Rashed Khan Menon of Workers Party (Menon), Mohiuddin Ahmed of Baksal, Dr. Mosharraf Hossain and Nazrul Islam Khan of BNP, Suranjeet Sengupta, Syed Altaf Hossain and Chowdhury Harun-or-Rashid of NAP, Justice Debesh Bhattacharya, Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Sangbad editor Ahmedul Kabir, MP, Dr M. A. Qafur of BIDS, Abu Zafar Shamsuddin, Dr Mosharraf Hossain of Dhaka University, Gaziul Haq advocate and Barrister Zahirul Haq.

8 Apr Session Reported

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 9 Apr 87 p 1

[Text]

The five-day fourth congress of the CPB in its second day meeting on Wednesday passed four resolutions on matters of public importance demanding immediate arrest of price spiral, nationalisation of all denationalised industries, withdrawal of enhanced bus fare and incentive to farmers.

The CPB congress expressed deep concern over the sky rocketing price of essential items including rice. It demanded reintroduction of rationing system in town and industrial areas. It urged the government to ensure bus services throughout the country with old fares.

The congress bitterly criticised the policy of denationalisation and

creation of holding companies. It demanded cessation of the denationalisation process and reinstatement of all terminated workers in denationalised units.

The congress expressed concern over the rising number of landless peasants in the country. It urged the government to distribute khas lands to genuine landless families.

The congress continued discussion on the report of the party General Secretary. On Wednesday 32 delegates participated in the discussion. On the day guests from the Soviet Communist party and GDR Socialist Unity Party addressed the congress expressing their solidarity with the communist movement in Bangladesh.

Third Day's Session

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 10 Apr 87 pp 1, 10

[Text]

The CPB Congress on Thursday held the present Government responsible for the political, social and economic crisis now facing the nation. In a resolution the congress observed that the anti-people and fascist policy as well as rampant corruption of the military regime had plunged the country into a critical political and economic situation.

The CPB Congress felt that the present Government can in no way protect the interest of the people and the country. The Presidential and Sangsad elections had revealed the fascist and anti-people character of the Government. Though the present Government had been rejected by the people and the anti-government movement reached its pinnacle, the congress regretted, due to weakness and division among the democratic and left forces the autocratic regime could not be overthrown. The meeting observed that

all the forces that want to bring a change in the political system should forge a greater unity by sinking their differences for a democratic revolution aimed at establishing peoples government.

The Congress adopted 11 resolutions on different matters of public importance. It extended total support to the 10-point demand of the students and demanded removal of discrimination in the present education system. The Congress also demanded construction of low-cost flats by Government to solve the housing problem in cities. In a resolution it stressed the need for people's resistance against alien culture. The Congress criticised the law and order situation in the country and demanded immediate improvement of the situation. It also expressed concern over the rising number of unemployed people in the country and demanded creation of employment opportunity.

Demands on Fourth Day

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 11 Apr 87 p 1

[Text]

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) on Friday demanded restoration of all fundamental rights of the people, independence of judiciary and freedom of the Press.

On the fourth day of the Fourth Congress of the party, the CPB also demanded withdrawal of ban on holding of public meetings at Baitul Mukarram and other important places of the country. It further demanded stoppage of all political repression.

Expressing concern over the continuance of autocratic activities in spite of the formal withdrawal of Martial Law, the Communist Party Congress demanded an end to all such autocratic activities.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh held two representatives' sessions. The two sessions were presided over by Maulana Hossain Ali and Mr. Shahidullah Chowdhury.

Concluding Session

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 12 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) concluded in Dhaka on Saturday with a call to all progressive democratic and patriotic political forces to form greater unity in carrying out a "national democratic revolution" aimed at achieving socialism, reports BSS.

The five-day Congress also re-elected Mohammad Farhad, MP, as General Secretary of the party and elected Mr. Saifuddin Ahmed Manik as Assistant General Secretary.

Mohammad Farhad said the long time President of the party, Mr. Moni Singh, was relieved of his chairmanship owing to his acute illness. But he would continue to be regarded as the "founding father" of communist movement in the country and be the number one member of CPB.

Briefing newsmen at the formal conclusion of the Congress at the Institute of Engineers on Saturday afternoon, Mr. Farhad said besides electing a 39-member central committee, the Congress also elected a 12-member secretariat.

The new secretaries are Abdus Salam, Mr. Marzurul Ahsan Khan, Mr. Ajoy Roy, Mr. Nurul Islam, Mr. Matiur Rahman, Mr. Mujahidul Islam Selim, Mr. Osman Ghani, Mr. Shamsuddoha, Mr. Shahidullah Chowdhury and Mr. Sankar Gosh.

He said elections were held after the past committee had submitted a panel before the Congress which later endorsed it unanimously. He however said eleven other persons had also announced their candidature for the membership to the central committee, but they later withdrew their names.

A Press release issued after the Congress stressed the need for a "national democratic revolution" observing that the present situation

in the country's socio-political arena was suitable for such a "revolution." Most of the newly elected central committee leaders, present at the Press briefing, said all the political forces of the country irrespective of their ideological differences could be united against the "number one enemy". The imperialists and their local collaborators, who, according to them were carrying out uninterrupted exploitation".

The CPB Congress also stressed the need for strengthening the ongoing movement "inside and outside the parliament" to establish democracy which, they said, does not exist. It noted that the real cause of the country's "instability" was the presence of the "imperialist forces" who have become the guiding force of Bangladesh's economy.

It called upon the people from all walks of life to rally round the cause of "democratic revolution", but did not rule out the possibility of forming a "left front" taking some other like-minded Marxist parties to achieve their main goal of socialism.

Replying to a question on the recently issued statement by 31 intellectuals, Mohammad Farhad said that the intellectuals have the right to express their opinion, "but we don't feel that there is any need for holding a mid-term poll at this stage." What we would stress is the movement, he added.

A party report said more than 900 delegates from the sixty districts took part in the Fourth Congress. The delegates represent 24.35 per cent of workers, peasants and farm labourers, 23.96 per cent are full time political workers, 12.83 per cent teachers, and 3.80 per cent students. Twenty women delegates also attended the Congress.

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 13 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

The five-day fourth congress of CPB concluded yesterday with a call to the people for participation in a new revolutionary form of struggle aimed at establishing socialism and democracy.

A 39-member central committee of the party with Mohammad Farhad as general secretary and Saifuddin Ahmed Manik as assistant general secretary was elected in the congress.

Besides, there are ten secretaries in the central committee. They are Abdus Salam, Manzoorul Ahsan Khan, Ajoy Roy, Nurul Islam, Matlur Rahman, Mujahidul Islam Selim, Osman Ghanl, Shamsud-daha, Shahidullah Chowdhury and Sankar Bose.

Maleka Begum of Mahila Parishad and Dr M. Akhtaruzzaman of Bangladesh College University Teachers Association have been inducted as new members of the central committee.

The position of party president so far held by ailing old leader Moni Singh, who is one of its founders, has been abolished and that of assistant general secretary created afresh. The number of central committee members has been raised from 33 to 39.

A political resolution was adopted in the congress calling for unity of all "patriotic, democratic and progressive" forces—left progressive forces in particular—to complete a "national democratic revolution" in order to put an end to "imperialist exploitation" and build an independent self-reliant economy.

It said that a "national democratic revolution" had become an imperative need

against "imperialism" and its collaborating rich men and reactionaries, for establishment of democracy and democratic rights, solution of immediate problems being faced by the people and resisting anti-independence, anti-progress and neo-fascist forces.

Analysing the existing situation in the country the resolution of the CPB congress said that on the one hand martial law had been continuing—some times in open form and some times in disguise as a result of intensive 'neo-colonial exploitation' and national backwardness and on the other, all sections of people including workers, agricultural labourers, peasants and those who belong to the middle-class had been increasingly taking part in movement against military autocracy and all forms of exploitation and poverty and for realising demands for democracy and materializing the spirit of the War of Liberation.

It added that a new form of movement was being felt in the national life to overcome the present all engulfing crisis.

It said that the political structure being built in the interest of imperialism and "comprador bourgeoisie was featured by depoliticizing of the people in different ways and disruption of the political institutions.

The resolution said that a political instability was prevailing the country and military coups had become instruments for the change of power.

It further observed that although the government was compelled to introduce "a controlled democratic system," an autocratic

rule was still persisting in reality. The Parliament is not sovereign and the present Government is expanding its power structure by appointing the military personnel in the civil administration, the resolution said.

On the other hand the opposition "democratic bourgeois, petty bourgeois and other parties have not been successful to emerge as political forces to be reckoned with because of their bankruptcy despite their remarkable popularity.

It said that in the present situation aspirations for radical change had become stronger among the people and so they were increasingly rallying round the Communist Party.

Referring to the Maoists of the past it said that these one-time Maoists had discarded their past politics, but they had failed to play due role at different phases of the democratic movement as they had not associated themselves with the "mainstream of the independence struggle".

It said that the revival of the extreme reactionary communal forces had been remarkable in the political arena of the country. They are getting patronisation of the government and linked with ultra-rightist forces.

The fourth congress of CPB was attended by 17 foreign communist delegates representing nine parties of eight countries and one international Marxist newspaper. Foreign communist delegates were not allowed to attend the third congress of the party held in 1980 by the then government.

Foreign Delegates Honored

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 13 Apr 87 p 8

[Text]

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) held a reception in honour of the foreign delegates from various Communist Parties to its just-concluded fourth congress at a local hotel in city yesterday afternoon, reports BSS.

Different leading political leaders of the country including Awami League President Sheikh Hasina Wajed, BNP leader Major General (Retd) Mujibur Rahman, BAKSAL General Secretary Abdur Razzak, Samyabadi Dal President Mohammad Toaha, Workers Party leaders Rashed Khan Menon and Hyder Akbar Khan Rono, NAP leader Pankaj Bhattacharya were present on the occasion. A number of leading

intellectuals of the country also attended.

Party General Secretary Mohammad Farhad welcomed the foreign delegates saying that their participation would help establish close links among the struggling people around the globe for the cause of socialism.

Mahmood Shukeyr, member, Central Committee, Communist Party of Palestine, who spoke on behalf of foreign communist delegates, expressed his satisfaction over the just ended CPB congress. He, however, stressed the need for greater unity among the progressive forces throughout the world to fight against imperialism.

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CSO: 4600/1594

PAPER REPORTS BBC INTERVIEW WITH HASINA

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 29 Mar 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina, who is now in London, told BBC last night that she did not set her goal at removing President H.M. Ershad from power immediately as the removal of an individual from power would not bring the desired result. Rather, she said, it would bring another general in power.

Sheikh Hasina said they were fighting for a change in the system.

Asked whether martial law was withdrawn from the country since they joined the last session of the Parliament, the Awami League chief said martial law was literally withdrawn but 'martial men' were still at the helm of the affairs of the country.

Sheikh Hasina defended her party's participation in the last parliamentary election and said they took the decision in line

with their belief in democracy. She said democracy was still being given a trial and there was an attempt to control Parliament from outside.

When her attention was drawn to the fact that there was an opposition inside in her party against participation in the election she said she was not aware of it. She claimed that their participation in the polls had given a shape to the country's democratic movement.

Replying to question about her party's repeated walkouts from the Parliament, Sheikh Hasina said it had put some amount of pressure on the government party and they were compelled to accommodate our views to some extent.

She hastened to add that they staged walkouts only when they were not allowed to speak in the parliament.

/9317

CSO: 4600/1597

REPORT ON FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE IN JATIYA SANGSAD

River Waters Discussed

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 26 Mar 87 pp 1, 12

[Text]

Foreign Minister Humayun Rashid Choudhury told the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday that the Government was trying to reach both short and long term agreement with India for sharing the Ganges water. He hoped that it might be possible to reach a long term agreement soon in this regard.

Taking part in the foreign policy debate on Wednesday in the Jatiya Sangsad the Foreign Minister said the Government in 1974 for the first time gave up the right on the Ganges water by agreeing to share water with India. The problem was lingering now due to short sightedness of the then Government he alleged.

The Foreign Minister said that Bangladesh had the total right on the Ganges water as a lower riparian country till 1974. He informed the House that the Awami League government gave up the right and agreed to give the share of the Ganges water to India in April 1975 through a memorandum of understanding Bangladesh would not face so much of harassment for reaching an agreement to share the Ganges

water if the then government did not agree to give up the inalienable right of the lower riparian country.

Taking part in the debate the Irrigation, Flood Control and Water Development Minister Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud said that the solution of the Ganges water must be found out in the Ganges. We shall not bring water from the Brahmaputra to resolve this problem he added.

Mr. Mahmud told the House that the present Government for the first time was trying to determine the share of all common rivers with India to ensure the Bangladesh share. He stated that Bangladesh gets only 18 per cent water from the Ganges but 57 per cent comes from the Brahmaputra and the rest from other common rivers. He said Bangladesh should find out the solutions to all these rivers for resolving the water problem with India once and for all.

Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud said that India established her right over 55000 cusecs of the Ganges water which used to flow to Bangladesh in

the lean period on may 16, 1974 when the Awami League Government agreed for the trial run of the Farakka barrage. He emphatically said that the Ganges crisis was created by Awami League agreeing to allow India for a test run of the feeder canal.

Mr. Tofael Ahmed of Awami League said the Government of Awami League was able to get 44000 cusecs of water in 1974 which was totally denied by Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud. Mr. Mahmud said India tactfully fixed the quota of their share without mentioning the share of Bangladesh.

Mr. Mahmud said Bangladesh was getting not less than 30 thousand cusecs of water during the last five years.

Mr. Ainuddin of Muslim League and Mr. Mujibur Rahman of Jamaat-e-Islami criticised the present government for giving up the 80 per cent guarantee clause in the memorandum of understanding. The 80 per cent guarantee clause was inserted in 1977 agreement.

Discussion of Chakma Situation

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 26 Mar 87 pp 1, 12

[Text]

Foreign Minister Humayun Rashid Choudhury told the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday that Bangladesh was ready to take back the genuine Bangladeshis fled to India from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. He, however, regretted that the Indian side was not responding to Bangladesh proposal to held discussion for expediting the repatriation.

Taking part in the debate on foreign policy in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday, the Foreign Minister stated the developments in the Hill Tracts following the terrorism by a section of Chakmas which resulted in exodus of some Bangladeshi tribal people to South Tripura. He said the Indian side claimed that 26,000 tribal Chakmas fled to India but on identification it was found that the number of genuine Bangladeshis was 24,329. Mr. Humayun Rashid informed the House that India and Bangladesh officials agreed to start repatriation on January 15 last. But on the night of January 14 some people from the Indian side created terror and the Indian side reported to Bangladesh officials that the refugees did not agree to go back for lack of security. He said later it was proposed by India to send a 15-member delegation of the Bangladeshis which was agreed by Bangladesh. But they did not come. Later Bangladesh sent a proposal to hold a dialogue on Home Ministry level which the India did not yet reciprocate. Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner of South Tripura claimed that more Chakmas had fled to India which the Foreign Minister denied.

Mr. Choudhury said that many Chakmas had came back to their home defying the Indian security and found their abode in Bangladesh peaceful. He assured that there was no security problems for the Chakmas who fled to India and they can come back any time. Bangladesh government was making all-out endeavour to develop the Chittagong Hill Tracts to improve the quality of life of the common people.

The Foreign Minister refuted the Indian claim that the repatriation of genuine Bangladeshis was not possible due to lack of safety and security. The Foreign Minister said this is not true.

He said Bangladesh was tackling the problem with India very efficiently and The Times of India reported on March 7 that Dhaka had cornered India in all aspects of diplomatic issues.

Regarding Tin Bigha corridor, the Foreign Minister said Bangladesh handed over Berubari by amending the Constitution without ensuring the handing over of Tin Bigha corridor. He said the short-sighted policy here also created the problem for Bangladesh. The Foreign Minister said Bangladesh had been to stall the Indian attempt to erect barbed wire fence along the India-Bangladesh border and Talpatty problem is being discussed.

Mr. Choudhury said as per available information the South Talpatty island belongs to Bangladesh. But India has also staked her claim on the island and it has been agreed to determine the ownership of the two mile long island through a joint survey.

Taking part in the debate Mr. Suranjit Sengupta suggested to that a parliamentary delegation be sent to the Hill Tracts to findout a political solution to the problem.

Prime Minister Mizanur Rahman Choudhury said our valiant soldiers were fighting the miscreants in the Hill Tracts to safeguard the country's independence.

About our problems with Pakistan the Foreign Minister said the two problems-sharing of assets and repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis were progressing. But regarding the sharing of assets there is no tangible development he added. The repatriation of three lakh Pakistanis may be expedited, he said adding that Bangladesh moved through diplomatic channels to pressurise Pakistan which is a success of the foreign policy.

Chowdhury: Policy a Success

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 26 Mar 87 pp 1, 12

[Text]

Prime Minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury summing up a debate on foreign policy in Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday claimed Bangladesh having achieved stunning successes in its foreign policy under the present Government.

He said Bangladesh's foreign policy is based on mutual understanding, respect for each other's sovereignty and equality.

He urged members to exercise restraint and to say anything that would create misunderstanding. Foreign relations is a sensitive issue, the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister brushed aside Opposition allegation that Bangladesh was pursuing a policy of appeasement.

The wide spectrum of foreign policy came under close scrutiny with Opposition blaming the Government for letting down the country. Muslim League which has entered upon a political alignment with the Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami blamed the Government for

surrendering to Indian pressure by agreeing to drop the guarantee clause on the sharing of the Ganges water.

Awami League and its allies charged the Government for abandoning the tested friends like India and the Soviet Union whose help they thought had brought Bangladesh into existence.

Defending the foreign policy, the Prime Minister said Bangladesh does not believe in confrontation and firmly advocates negotiation as the only measure in resolving bilateral problems. He said Bangladesh has cordial ties with the contiguous states. SAARC is the crowning glory of Bangladesh's foreign policy, the Prime Minister said.

Foreign Minister Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury in his own inimitable manner said Bangladesh's foreign policy was a story of success all the way.

He said there was no scope for

emotion or drama in diplomacy. He said.

The Foreign Minister said Bangladesh's relations with the United States and the Soviet Union have touched new heights. He also mentioned Japan and China as very good friends of Bangladesh.

He described Bangladesh's relations with OIC members as historic. Bangladesh's ties with the neighbours despite some irritants are excellent.

He said Bangladesh is fully committed to the cause of the Palestinians and demands withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and Kampuchea.

He said Bangladesh wants complete disarmament and diversion of funds for development of Least Developed Countries. He said about 20 billion US dollars are being spent on armament each week.

He said Bangladesh's endeavour for a new international economic order will persist.

Awami League Allegations

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 26 Mar 87 pp 1, 12

[Text]

The Awami League members in the Jatiya Sangsad accused the present Government of shunning the anti-imperialist foreign policy pursued by the Awami League Government. They also blamed all post-75 Governments of making Bangladesh a sanctuary for the imperialist forces.

The Awami League and their eight-party allies in the Parliament accused the government of ignoring the importance of 'true friend India' and tested friend Soviet Union who stood by Bangladesh during the Liberation War. They further alleged that Bangladesh expelled 14 Soviet diplomats in 1983 to satisfy the United States. Awami League M.P. M.A. Jalil said Sheikh Mujib and four leaders were killed following the conspiracy by the U.S. imperialism.

Taking part in the debate on foreign policy in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Malek Ukil, said that Awami League Government pursued a foreign policy based on the principle of friendship to all and malice to none. He said Bangladesh should not involve in the cold war of the super powers.

Mr. Malek Ukil claimed that the foreign policy of Awami League Government was balanced and successful. He said Awami League had relations with the Soviet Union and the United States. He recalled the contribution of the Soviet Union in our Liberation War. He also said it was not true that Awami League Government had given up the claim of Bangladesh over Berubari adding that it was never the part of the then Pakistan.

Mr. Tofael said criticised the induction of non-cadre people in the Foreign Service and posting of Ambassador in Brunei who is related to a high government functionary.

Mr. M.A.Jalil said the post -75 Government in Bangladesh gave up the anti-imperialist foreign policy pursued by Awami League Government. He said Awami League started diplomatic negotiations with Saudi Arabia and China. He said that Awami League Government provided a mission for the Vietnamese before 1975. But he regretted now there is no Vietnamese mission in Dhaka.

Mr. Suranjit Sengupta and Mr. Proshun Kanti Roy of NAP and CPB respectively pleaded for gearing up the disarmament movement and Bangladesh should play a leading role in this regard.

Mr. Ainuddin of Muslim League and Mr. Mujibur Rahman of Jamaat

pleaded closer ties with Muslim countries to consolidate the independence and sovereignty of the country.

The Speaker Mr. Shamsul Huda Choudhury allowed a number of Awami League members and all group leader to take part in the debate. He did not allow Mr. Sultan and Mr. A.S.M.Abdur Rab of JSD who staged a walkout in protest.

Mr Malek Ukil criticised the holding of SAARC summit and establishment of Secretariat outside Bangladesh. Mr. Mahmudur Rahman Belayet (AL) told the House that the credit of holding the SAARC conference should go to late President Ziaur Rahman because he floated the idea of SAARC.

Mr. Tofael Ahmed said the foreign policy of Awami League was truly non-aligned and identified the real friends. He said the Bangladesh got OIC membership under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib and obtained UN membership too.

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CSO: 4600/1596

AWAMI LEAGUE PRESIDIUM, SECRETARIAT MEET IN DHAKA

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 6 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

The Awami League has called for abolition of the presidential system of government, resignation of President Ershad, establishment of what it said a truly representative government and ensuring the sovereignty of the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament).

The call was made at the two-day meeting of the party's highest policy making bodies -- the presidium and the secretariat -- which concluded yesterday. Presidium member Abdus Samad Azad chaired the meeting held at the party central office in city.

The meeting, which reviewed the latest political and economic situation in the country, said in a resolution the only way out from the present crisis is putting an end to the rule of Ershad government, establishment of the sovereignty of the parliament and bringing into being a government truly representing the people, through a mass movement and mass upsurge.

It called for an united and intensified movement by all sections of people to achieve these goals.

In a resolution, the meeting said a grave crisis had now gripped all spheres of national life and blamed the present rulers for this. Tracing the background of the prevailing situation in economic, political and other fields, the meeting said autocratic rule overtly or covertly persisted in the country since the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975 and this led to plaguing of national life with multifarious problems.

The Awami League in keeping with its tradition would continue its ceaseless struggle to salvage the country and its people from what it said the 'state of anarchy and restore the rights of the people, it said.

The meeting expressed concern over the upward trend in the prices of rice and other essentials. It said that the government contention that the food

situation was satisfactory did not reflect the reality.

The meeting demanded effective steps on an emergency basis for ensuring supply of rice at a cheap price and keeping the price level of essentials under control.

The AL presidium and secretariat meeting said that the party was carrying forward a democratic movement for establishment of unadulterated democracy and the people of all walks of life played their role in this regard. The statement by 31 intellectuals recently was also a step in this direction, it said.

The meeting in another resolution, said that the intellectuals were now being subjected harassment. The name of chief editor of Dainik Bangla poet Shamsur Rahman has been deleted from the printers' line and this amounted to interference with the freedom of individuals. It called for withdrawal of the action concerning Mr. Rahman.

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CSO: 4600/1608

NEWSMEN BRIEFED ON EFFORTS IN CHITTAGONG HILLS

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 2 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

The Information Secretary Nurunnabi Choudhury yesterday once again called upon the so-called "Shanti Bahini" people to give up the path of violence and return to normal life, reports BSS.

He also reiterated government's pledge to protect the life and property of all Bangladesh nationals inside the country and warned against the reign of terror let loose by a handful of misguided people who were carrying on raids on the peace-loving people from across the border.

'We will not allow a handful of elements to misguide the entire tribal community in the Hill Tracts' he told the press briefing and reiterated government's determination to combat the terrorism unleashed by a group of Chakmas encouraged by interested quarters.

The Information Secretary gave the background of the emergence of the so-called 'Shanti Bahini' and said that they were a handful of misguided people.

He said that 1,814 'Shanti Bahini' members had surrendered to the government till January 31, 1985 taking the advantage of the government amnesty declared to them.

He said, Massive development efforts had been launched for all round uplift of Chittagong Hill Tracts region and integrate the people of the region into the national mainstream.

Information Secretary Nurunnabi Chowdhury who is also

the spokesman of the Government on internal affairs briefing newsmen in Dhaka yesterday said that such efforts had already started resulting in speedy development of the region.

He gave an account of the measures the government had undertaken to raise the standard of the quality of living of the tribal people in the hill tracts and special plans and programmes for the development of the area.

Referring to the hitherto backwardness of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region in historical perspective during the British rule and the Pakistani days the Information Secretary said that the otherwise nomadic tribals without title to any lands had been given title to land for the first time during the Bangladesh days.

Listing the developmental programmes undertaken in the region he said that a multi-sectorial plan of Taka 62 crore 43 lakhs, another special five-year plan from government's own resources with a total outlay of Taka 262 crore and ten lakhs, a UNICEF-assisted project of about Taka two crore and another Taka 12 crore 50 lakh under the upazila development programme were now under execution for all round development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region.

Vigorous efforts were being made for development of agriculture, road construction, afforestation, agricultural research,

storage facilities, rural industries, health and family planning, education and other areas of life of tribal people, he said.

Tracing the history of the tribal people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Mr Chowdhury said that they were of Sino-Tibetan and Burmese origin and the region was being inhabited by 13 tribes including Chakma, Marma, Rong, Murung, Lushai etc.

About the land administration in the area, he said a regulation of 1900 introduced a system of short-lease to the tribal people without any title but now the tribal people were given an area of 6.25 acres of land of which 0.25 acre as homestead and with full title under the Jhumia rehabilitation scheme. Thus for the first time, tribals were given ownership of land during the Bangladesh period, he said.

In pursuance of government policy of developing backward areas in the country huge investments had been made in the CHT under the various programmes in order to raise standard of living of the people in this region the Information Secretary said adding that the tribal people were benefitting from the developments taking place there. He said that the CHT Development Board was established in 1976 which enjoyed wide planning executing administrative and financial powers for development.

A number of development programmes was at present un-

der execution there with a multi-sectorial programme financed jointly by Asian Development bank and the government being at advanced stage of execution. The programme has 11 components covering upland settlement afforestation and settlement, road construction, agricultural research, agricultural extension, development of nurseries, storage facilities, cottage and rural industries, health the family planning and strengthening of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board.

The programme was aimed at settling 2,300 tribal families of shifting cultivators who had been devastating forests and failed to get a decent living from their nomadic existence, he said.

The programme was designed to improve their living conditions, through horticulture, forestry and agriculture and by taking provisions for health, education, and other needed infrastructure.

Mr Chowdhury said that the largest programmes embodied in the special Five-Year Plan fully financed by the government covered a period from 1984-85 to 1988-89 with separate provisions of money for agriculture, forestry, livestock, fisheries, industry and power, communications water supply, etc with 50 percent of the planned outlay being already spent.

ADP allocation of Taka 46 crore had been made for fiscal 1986-87, the Information Secretary said.

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CSO: 4600/1603

WORKERS PARTY, JSD SUPPORT INTELLECTUALS' APPEAL

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 4 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

Bangladesh Workers' Party (Menon group) and JSD (Inu group) have extended support to the statement of 31 intellectuals.

Mr. Rashed Khan Menon, leader of Bangladesh Workers' Party said that the statement of 31 intellectuals reflected the national consensus created through the movement for five-point demand. He criticised the statement of Government leaders regarding the constitutional point of the intellectuals' statement and said that it proved the shallow knowledge of the Government leaders on the Constitution. He asked the Government leaders whether promulgation of Martial Law, election under Martial Law and oath-taking under Martial Law were constitutional.

He also condemned the statement of Mr. Suranjit Sen Gupta. He termed CPB, NAP and such other parties as supporters of "martial

democracy".

JSD Central Executive Committee in its meeting on Friday hailed the statement of the intellectuals and considered it as the reflection of the hopes and aspirations of the people. The meeting urged all democratic forces to extend support to the statement of the intellectuals and launch a united movement against the present autocratic regime.

The JSD Central Executive Committee meeting also condemned the Government action to delete the name of poet Shamsur Rahman from the printers line of the Dainik Bangla. It may be mentioned here that poet Shamsur Rahman, Chief Editor of the Dainik Bangla, was the among the 31 intellectuals who issued the statement demanding a neutral interim government.

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CSO: 4600/1604

BEGUM ZIA TELLS PRESS FEARS OVER FOOD SUPPLY

Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 5 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Text]

BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed grave concern over what she said the serious food crisis prevailing in various parts of the country including northern districts and demanded immediate opening of gruel kitchens to combat the situation.

Addressing a hurriedly called press conference at the National Press Club last evening, she also accused the Government for "bluffing the people about the real situation" and observed that it was incapable of handling the crisis because of "corruption". She demanded resignation of the Government.

The BNP leader also hailed the recent statement by 31 leading intellectuals on the national issues and the present situation in the country. She said, it reverberated the spirit of our movement during the last five years.

Echoing their demand Begum Zia reiterated her party stand for dissolution of Parliament, resignation of the Government and holding of fresh polls under a neutral, non-partisan government to establish democracy in the country. She added that free polls are the only way to restore democracy.

While answering a host of questions Begum Zia digged at Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, now in London, and others for what she said, "keeping the martialmen in power and for betraying the movement."

However, she added, "we are on the streets. If anyone joins our ranks we would not mind." She made the comment

when a newsmen drew her attention whether there was any possibility for a greater alliance of opposition groups.

Coming back to the food situation Begum Zia said, she had visited city's rice markets yesterday afternoon and reports that she had receive from the countryside indicate the gravity of the crisis. "Near famine situation is prevailing today in the country, people are dying, due to price spiralling of rice and other food-stuff", she added.

Referring to her visit to the city markets of Babu Bazar and Captain Bazar and reports from the countryside, she said that low quality rice was selling at Taka 11 to 16 per seer, medium between Taka 14 to 16, pulses Taka 20 to 21. The wheat and flour situation was equally bad. The overall trend, she said, was bad as the Government had failed to handle the situation properly. "They are incapable. Because of their loot, bribery and corruption the situation has assumed that proportion."

Begum Zia further alleged that rice stocks are inadequate in the market and the rice traders had told her that prices would go up further in Ramzan. She claimed that the shopkeepers had shown her records and told her that due to inadequate supply prices were going up.

But the Government was misleading the people over the radio and television that fair price shops are operating, but she claimed that she did not come across any such shop.

Answering a question about her party's programme for

movement, she said that on April 9 her party would demonstrate in the city to register its protest against food crisis. She told another questioner that a so-called big party and others are in league with the Government. "There is none to speak on behalf of the people other than BNP", she said.

She told another questioner that during BNP's time there were food crises but the way it tackled the situation received appreciation at home and abroad. None had died due to starvation at that time, she added.

ON INTELLECTUALS' STATEMENT

On the statement of the intellectuals BNP leader told a questioner that she had no contact with the intellectuals before or after they issued the statement. "They came up with the statement on the basis of their own thinking. But the intellectuals always speak about the nation, on that count our thoughts may coincide", she said. About the removal of the name of Poet Shamsur Rahman one of the intellectuals, from the printer's line of the Dainik Bangla as its chief editor, Begum

Zia said that it reflects the government's character. "If any one speaks the truth he loses his job," she remarked.

Answering a question she said that the intellectuals' statement had no ambiguity. "Only the government and its collaborators have termed it ambiguous."

Asked whether she would participate in any mid-term poll as the intellectuals had called for, Begum Zia said that her party's stand was clear in this regard. If our demands are accepted we will certainly join the elections, she added.

On the shape of a neutral government as demanded by her party Begum Zia said that it's "outlines are certainly there. Let the Government accept our demand then we will come out with details". On the revival of the Constitution and running of the government in accordance with it she told a questioner: "We don't recognise this government."

BNP Secretary General Obaidur Rahman, who was present on the occasion added, "who has revived the constitution? Seventh Amendment was passed to legalise the illegal activities of the Government."

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CSO: 4600/1606

WRITER SEES FAILURE OF THIRD 5-YEAR PLAN

Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 1 Apr 87 pp 1, 10

[Text]

Long on promises and short in performance, the Third Five-Year Development Plan (1985-90) is foundering on a rocky road. Shortfalls in investments, growth and implementation operations during the first two years of the Plan have made its likely outcome quite uncertain. The actual performance so far, trailing far behind the projected targets, have shown lags on several fronts. The objectives of the current mid-term plan to accelerate the overall growth process of the national economy and to alleviate poverty are being frustrated in the process.

Planning commission will undertake its mid-term Third Plan review early next year. The review as the current broad indices reflect is most likely to lead to pruning operations in terms of its original targets and special sectoral goals. With serious gaps persisting between actions and promises, the Third Plan is now obviously poised to meet the same fate as its predecessor plans.

Both public and private investments in fiscal 1985-87 fiscal 1986-87 would be around 30 per cent short of the projected levels in real terms for the years under the Plan.

Average annual GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth during the first two fiscal years under the plan would be about four per cent compared to the projected average annual growth rate of 5.4 per cent for the plan period. The actual growth so far under the Plan reflects a slight decline on the previous two years (1983-84 and 1984-85). But the realised growth performance in

1985-86 and 1986-87 would be well below the annual average 5.8 per cent in the 1973-80 period.

Project implementation under public sector investment programme has neither shown any improvement in the first two years of the current Third Plan period. An overwhelming majority of projects included under two successive Annual Development Programmes (ADPs) in 1985-86 and 1986-87 have presented formidable problems in their implementation. The project completion targets under the two ADPs will remain unfulfilled by over 30 per cent. Only 62 development projects under ADP in 1985-86 could be compelled against the target for completion at about 100 projects for the year. In 1986-87, 97 projects out of a 648 development projects under the original ADP for the year are targetted for completion. The latest indications suggest that not more than 60 development projects would be completed during the current fiscal year.

An overwhelming domination of on-going development projects over the successive ADPs would amply illustrate the fundamental weaknesses of public investment programme under the mid-term plan in the country. Time and cost over-run cause sacrifice of potential benefit from investments. In the revised ADP for 1985-86 and in the original ADP for 1986-87, allocations for carry-over projects were 98 per cent and 95 per cent respectively.

The implementation stacks in public investment programme have

been responsible for slow utilisation of project aid. The increase in project aid disbursements from 591 million US dollars in 1984-85 to 70 million dollars in 1985-86 and then to 725 million dollars in 1986-87 has not been due to any improvement in implementation performance. It has largely been because of cross-currency exchange rate fluctuations, mainly depreciation of US dollar in terms of other major foreign currencies.

IDA aid falls

A recent World Bank estimate showed that the disbursement ratio for the IDA (soft-loan affiliate body of the Bank) portion of project aid fell by about two percentage points if the exchange rate effect was adjusted. And, if the currency composition of total project aid disbursements from other sources were the same as IDA's, this would imply that the overall disbursement ratio of project aid in relation to the pipeline actually fell in 1985-86, the estimate indicates.

In poverty alleviation areas which constitute the key focus of the Third Plan, the overall situation has not also been much promising. Notwithstanding some gains in real incomes for the rural wage-labourers over the recent, the overall nutritional standard i.e. quality of diet has worsened. Per capita availability of pulses, fish, chicken and eggs declined. The prices of protein-rich food and vegetables each rose by 14 per cent per year from 1982 to 1986. The average (weighted by consumption) price of rice, wheat and potatoes increased by 8 per cent per year during the same period.

The World Bank (WB) in its latest report on Bangladesh economic situation has assessed the country's development performance so far under the current Third Five-Year Plan with a marked degree of reservations. The report, prepared in the context of the forthcoming Aid Club meeting in Paris, notes, "Although growth rates are respectable, they well below the targets established for the Third Five-Year Plan and while there are good reasons for the shortfalls, there is nonetheless a sense that in some areas progress is slipping."

The current economic situation,

as the WB report stresses, has brought into sharp focus the needs for Planning Commission to give more attention for implementing the development strategy laid out in the Third Plan. The implementation shortfall during the first two years of the current Third Plan has laid bare the continuing weakness of the planning process, the report suggested.

The failures of the Commission to bring discipline, enforce accountability and ensure adherence to development priorities have indeed landed the planning process in a state of critical mass. The Commission's overriding concern for short-term crisis management has detracted itself from more fundamental development needs. The relevance of the planning framework for tackling long-term development problems has thus tended to be lost in the process.

Organisational weakness

The organisational weaknesses of the Planning Commission have partly been responsible for its low-key performance for overall economic management in accordance with, well-charted long-term development priorities and imperatives. This has created a situation where there is a lack of concern whether development targets are not or plans achieved.

The World Bank has itself taken a very critical look at this 'lack of concern' on the part of the Planning Commission about the real development performance of the economy in terms of its potentials. The needs for strengthening the Planning process and, thus, tuning up the operational efficiency of the Planning Commission have now been heightened by the unpromising performance in the first two years of the current Third Plan. The plan which was the result of about 20 detailed sectoral studies involving a huge amount of public expenditures for footing the bill of consultants' fees has by and large, lost its relevance only within one and a half year's time. The National Economic Council approved the Third Plan in December, '85 with alleviation of poverty through higher production, steady growth performances and greater employment opportunities as its main themes.

BRIEFS

AWAMI LEAGUER TO MOSCOW--Awami League Presidium member Syeda Zohra Tajuddin will fly to Moscow today in a flight of Aeroflot. She will be operated upon there for her intestinal disease. She has been suffering from the disease for a long time. [Text] Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 13 Apr 87 p 8] /9317

NICARAGUAN AMBASSADOR'S CREDENTIALS--Mr Justice B.A. Siddiky, permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations presented his credentials to President Daniel Ortega Saavendra of Nicaragua Managua last Tuesday, reports BSS. Mr Justice Siddiky is concurrently accredited to Nicaragua as Bangladesh Ambassador. The Bangladesh Ambassador conveyed the warm and friendly greetings from President Hussain Muhammad Ershad to President Ortega. He expressed the hope that the existing common aspirations for development and well being of their two peoples would provide impetus for strengthening mutual bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. Reciprocating his sentiments, the President of Nicaragua conveyed his greetings to Bangladesh President Hussain Muhammad Ershad and expressed best wishes for the continued well being and prosperity of Bangladesh and her people, added the message. [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 10 Apr 87 p 3] /9317

EGYPTIAN, BRUNEI ENVOYS--Mr Mohammed Moustapha Badr has been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Bangladesh, reports BSS. Born on December 10, 1931, Mr Badr obtained bachelor of law and did post graduate studies in international law from Alexandria University. He joined diplomatic service in 1957 and served in Egyptian missions in Bogota, Kuwait, Singapore and Khartoum. Prior to his present assignment, Mr Badr held the post of Vice-Director of Asian Department of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is married and has two children. Datu Paduka Hamid Bin Jaafar has been appointed High Commissioner of Negara Brunei Darussalam to Bangladesh with residence in Bangkok. Born on March 13, 1926, Mr Jaafar had his education in the field of agriculture at home and abroad. He was appointed Ambassador to Thailand in 1984. He is married and has three children. [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 4 Apr 87 p 3] /9317

FORMER PRESIDENT ILL--Former President Mohammadullah had been admitted to Suhrawardy Hospital in the early hours of Thursday following a massive heart attack, reports BSS. He is now undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit of the hospital. A medical board headed by Brigadier M.A. Malek, Director Cardio-Vascular Institute of the hospital, has been formed for the treatment of the former President. [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 4 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

EKOTA BAN WITHDRAWN--The Government has withdrawn the ban order on the weekly 'Ekota' imposed on June 5, 1986, reports BSS. The weekly newspaper will resume its publication from next Friday (April 3). [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 1 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

FUNDAMENTALISTS BLAMED--The five-party alliance has expressed concern at the untoward incidents in different parts of the country provoked by a fundamentalist party and its student front. In a statement issued yesterday on behalf of the alliance, Nirmal Sen said that one poor rickshaw puller, Afsaruddin, was beaten to death by the workers of this fundamentalist party on April 3 at Chatar Bazar in Gazipur district. He noted with resentment that no action had yet been taken against the person responsible for the killing. The alliance demanded identification and arrest of the culprits and exemplary punishment to them. [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 9 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

FORMER PRIME MINISTER ILL--President Ershad yesterday directed the authority concerned to take necessary steps for treatment of former Prime Minister Shah Azizur Rahman abroad, reports BSS. The President recently visited the ailing former Prime Minister who is now under treatment at the P.G. Hospital. Shah Azizur Rahman is being sent to a hospital in the United Kingdom for treatment. The President has sanctioned fund for his treatment. [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 10 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

NEW NEPALESE AMBASSADOR--Dr Mohan Prasad Lohani has been appointed Ambassador of the Kingdom of Nepal to Bangladesh, a Foreign Office Press release said on Monday, reports BSS. Born in November 1940, Dr Lohani did his M.A. and Ph.D. He was Nepal's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1976 to 1980. He attended a number of international conferences and is the President of Nepal Council of World Affairs. Prior to his present assignment Dr Lohani was Professor of English, Tribhuvan University Kathmandu. [Text] [Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 31 Mar 87 p 3] /9317

AMBASSADOR TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA--The Government have decided to concurrently accredit Mr A.K.M. Morshed at present Ambassador of Bangladesh to the German Democratic Republic, as Ambassador of Bangladesh to Czechoslovakia, a PID handout said, reports BSS. [Text] [Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 3 Apr 87 p 3] /9317

DHAKA-RIJADH AIR ACCORD--Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday exchanged documents of ratification of the air transport agreement between the two countries at a simple ceremony in Dhaka, reports BSS. Mr Sayeed Ahmed, Secretary in Charge, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, and Mr Abdul Latif Ibrahim Al-Maimanee, Saudi Ambassador in Bangladesh, exchanged the

notes on behalf of their respective governments. The air transport agreement was signed earlier between Dhaka and Riyadh considering the importance of the continued development of air transportation between the two friendly and brotherly countries. The ratification was done to confirm and carry out all stipulations contained in the agreement. Mr Maimanee while exchanging the notes expressed his confidence that the two Muslim countries would come closer to each other through exchange of the notes. The Managing Director of Bangladesh Biman, Mr M. Faizur Razzaque, the Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority, Group Capt (Retd) M. Shaukatul Islam and other high officials of Civil Aviation Ministry and Biman were present on the occasion. [Text] [Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 2 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

DHAKA-SOMALIA CULTURAL ACCORD--Bangladesh and Somalia yesterday signed an agreement on cultural, educational, scientific and technical cooperation between the two countries, reports BSS. Education Minister Mahbubur Rahman and Somali Ambassador in Bangladesh Mr Mohammad Ahmed Ali signed the agreement on behalf of the two governments. Under the agreement, Bangladesh and Somalia would encourage collaboration in the field of education, science, arts, culture and information. The two sides agreed to encourage the study of literature and civilization of each other in their educational establishments and exchange the visits of teachers/professors and cultural groups, radio and television programmes and documentary films. [Text] [Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 5 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

CONCERN OVER TALPATTY--Bangladesh has expressed its surprise over the statement made by Indian Minister of State for External Affairs at the Lower House of the Indian Parliament recently over the South Talpatty Island issue, reports BSS. When his attention was drawn to the statement of the Indian State Minister for External Affairs in the Lok Shaba as broadcast by the All India Radio on April 10, a spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the ownership of the island had been under discussions between the governments of Bangladesh and India for the past several years. He said that both sides had claimed the ownership of the island and it had been agreed that the issue would be resolved amicably through exchange of data, and if necessary, by joint survey. "In the light of this understanding, it was surprising that such a statement should be made in Parliament," the spokesman said, adding that Bangladesh High Commissioner in New Delhi had been instructed to take up the matter with the Indian government. [Text] [Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 13 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

BORDER INCIDENT REPORTED--Satkhira, Apr 12--One Indian BSF personnel named Gopalkrishnan who with his four other companions entered Bangladesh through Satkhira border and manhandled Bangladeshi was caught red-handed. He was later handed over to the Hijaldi BDR camp. A BDR source said that Gopalkrishnan and his companions entered the village Hijaldi under Kalaroa Upazila with arms and beat Bangladeshi cultivators who were ploughing land on April 9. Local people chased them and caught one BSF personnel. Tension was prevailing following this incident on Indo-Bangladesh border and a flag meeting was held at Hijaldi. Meanwhile, the BSF authority has

confessed the fault and after a peaceful negotiation Gopalkrishnan was handed over to Indian authorities yesterday. The flag meeting was represented by Major Humayun Kabir, Wing Commander, Nine Battalion and Col Gar Wal on behalf of Bangladesh Rifles and Indian Border Security Force respectively. [Text] [Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 13 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

CSO: 4600/1611

INDIA

BULK OF DEFENSE BUDGET INCREASE FOR MODERNIZATION, UPGRADING

Frankfurt/Main FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE in German 28 Mar 87 p 6

[Article by Klaus Natorp, datelined New Delhi, 27 March: "Modernization of Indian Armed Forces Swallows up More and More Money; Defense Budget Increased 43 Percent; German Submarines and Soviet Tanks"]

[Text] The increase of the Indian defense budget by no less than 43 percent to now 125 billion rupees, which Prime Minister Rajiv Ghandi announced when he submitted the 1987/88 budget, has caused a stir. A total of 125 billion rupees—that is DM 17.85 billion at the present rate of exchange. Why this dramatic increase? An important reason is likely to be the modernization of the equipment of the Indian armed forces which swallows up more funds every year. Especially the reconditioning and expansion of the Indian navy costs a lot of money. Apparently India wants to be not only a strong land power but also wants to achieve more influence than heretofore at sea—not surprising in view of its long coastline. Several new ships are under construction in India, others have been ordered abroad, including the latest submarines, frigates, destroyers and an aircraft carrier.

For example, recently another submarine built by the Howaldtswerke in Kiel arrived in Bombay. India will add a total of four submarines of German design to its navy. Two have been delivered, two are being reproduced under license in India. But it is uncertain whether India will exercise the options for two additional submarines from the FRG because differences of opinion have arisen concerning the price. The Soviet Union, from which India also ordered four submarines of the latest type, may possibly profit from that. These submarines are said to cost only one third of the amount charged by the German manufacturer—with allegedly equally high quality. Moreover, India can pay for Soviet deliveries with rupees. The Indians are also upset over the fact that the Howaldtswerke in Kiel permitted submarine blueprints to get to the Republic of South Africa.

But not only the expansion of the Indian navy swallows up ever greater sums of money from year to year; modernization of the ground forces is getting more expensive all the time. For example, the army is looking

for a follow-on model for its own tank design Vijayanta. Five prototypes have been completed and are undergoing testing either for production under license or as a complete in-house design. Even though production is not expected to start until 1995, development costs accrue even now. Moreover the plan is to recondition about 900 of the total of 1400 Vijayanta tanks together with 700 obsolete Soviet T-55 tanks, i.e. to provide them with a new engine and an improved fire control system.

Combat Aircraft Come From Many Countries

The firms that were asked to develop a 1,500-hp engine for this project also include the German MTU (Motoren-und Turbinen-Union). The chance that it will get the order are not bad. With the large numbers which are involved in India, that would be a profitable transaction. Thus in the meantime the Indian army is using about 600 Soviet T-72 tanks and many will be added from Indian production under license, which is just about to start. All told the Indian army is said to have about 2,800 tanks at its disposal at present. It is obvious that the transformation of the ground forces from a predominantly purely infantry army to a fully mechanized one is to be greatly hurried along.

A continuous, costly modernization process is underway in the Indian air force, too. Similar to the navy and the army, the air force, too, must get along with a veritable assortment of war materiel from many countries. The core of the air forces is formed by Soviet MiG 21 to 27 aircraft, but there are also British Jaguars, French Mirage, domestic designs and soon perhaps also a few Dornier aircraft. The Do-228, built in India under license, is to fly mainly short distances in domestic Indian civil air service and to serve coastal surveillance of the customs service, but a military version is also being planned for reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare. Incidentally all costs for the Dornier program are included in the budget of the interior ministry because coastal surveillance is a part of this department and most aircraft are planned for this purpose. Thus the defense expenditures presumably are hidden in several other budgets. Therefore the share of the Indian military budget in the budget as a whole is undoubtedly greater than officially stated.

At present the following are now on order, among others: 40 MiG-29, 165 MiG-27 M and MiG-21, 12 Il-76, 18 Mirage 2000 H, 31 Jaguars (to be assembled in India), and numerous aircraft of Indian production, helicopters and transport aircraft of various types from Great Britain and the Soviet Union--in short, it is a gigantic program which the Indian armed forces have undertaken for the next few years and many ask themselves whether India is thus perhaps undertaking too much.

All told the country has now about 1,260,000 men under arms. But the personnel costs of this armed force, all career soldiers, are not the

biggest item in the Indian defense budget. The pay is low in India and a standing army of this size is appropriate for a country of India's size. The high costs arise as a result of the procurement and maintenance of expensive war materiel. The generals consider modernization of the equipment as indispensable for military reasons, but for the government the political importance of strong armed forces takes on a prominent position. These armed forces back up its supremacy in the region. The effects in the surrounding area are already noticeable. Not a single one of India's neighbors now seriously questions India's claims of supremacy any longer.

12356

CSO: 4620/26

MINISTER SAYS SHARI'AH BILL NEEDS CHANGES

Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 19 Apr 87 p 1

[Text]

ISLAMABAD, April 18: Religious Affairs Minister Haji Saifullah Khan has said that the controversial Shariat Bill sponsored by two Senators needs drastic amendments before it is passed by the Parliament.

In an informal chat with 'The Muslim' he claimed that the Bill's movers accept that it had some "defects" which required rectification.

The Minister hoped that the Bill would be adopted by Parliament through a unanimous vote after necessary changes were made in it.

Haji Saifullah said in answer to a question that the authorities had initiated a dialogue with leaders of various schools of thought to seek their opinion. However, elaborate negotiations would be held with all the eminent ulama.

He said the government would try that the feelings of no section of the society were hurt.

The Minister said that a high powered committee comprising MNAs would shortly submit its recommendations to revamp the administrative and judicial system

of the country. He said the Government would implement these proposals to provide speedy and cheap justice to the masses.

Haji Saifullah said Prime Minister Junejo's Five-Point Programme envisaged the establishment of a real Islamic state where the welfare of the people was given top priority.

The Shariat Bill sponsored by Senators Samiul Haq and Qazi Abdul Latif and backed by Jamaat-e-Islami legislators has evoked strong opposition from vital groups of lawyers, politicians, religious scholars and particularly women organisations since its introduction in the Senate.

Women organisations have staged demonstrations in favour of and against the Bill. Even a majority of the ruling Muslim League legislators have disfavoured it.

But the Jamaat-e-Islami, along with some other religious groups, have formed a United Front to press for the passage of the Bill immediately. The Front claims that no major religious party had opposed the proposed legislation.

/9317

CSO: 4600/221

PPP'S NEED FOR CONCRETE PLANS DISCUSSED

Lahore NAWA-I-WAQT in Urdu 11 Apr 87 p 9, 12

[Report by Mohammad Ali: "Political Future of the PPP"]

[Excerpts] Sixteen days before participating in the 8th anniversary of her father's death former prime minister of Pakistan, PPP's chairperson Benazir Bhutto participated in a Karachi Press Club meeting attended by Mehmood Haroon, home minister during the martial law regime. The home ministry was led by Mr Haroon during the time when Mr Bhutto was being tried and was hanged, and for a period after that. Miss Bhutto had openly declared that she would never associate with any cabinet member of the martial law regime responsible for her father's hanging when Mir Ali Ahmad Talpore, former defense minister, had paid tribute to the Bhutto women a while ago. In a public meeting in Hyderabad she had called Mr Talpore a traitor and had cut off all her political relations with the Talpore family. However, Ghulam Mustafa Shah, former vice chancellor of Sind University, had invited Miss Bhutto as a political rival of Mr Haroon for this meeting. Benazir Bhutto sat on the stage. She was separated from Mr Haroon by the sister of Qazi Abdulmajid Abid, federal minister of information, and Aapa Shumsh Abbasi, famous Sindhi educator. Professor Ghulam Mustafa Shah declared Islamabad the "center of all evils" in his speech. He, however, forgot that at the time when Mr Bhutto was waiting to be hanged, he himself was an unofficial adviser to the home minister. There was a time when Professor Ghulam Mustafa Shah was a strong supporter of G.M. Sayyed. He is grooming his own personal future by calling Benazir the hope of Sind's future. Benazir's compromise with Mr Haroon has enraged PPP's devoted workers. They are expressing this anger openly. The PPP, however, is a kind of party that does not identify mistakes of its leaders. Some sources within the PPP have indicated that Benazir is trying to take advantage of Haroon family's "international connections." Yusuf Haroon, Mohammad Haroon, and Ilahi Bax Somroo had a long meeting with G.M. Sayyed in his village, San. It appears that the PPP leadership is still functioning in the 1977 environments even at the 8th death anniversary of Mr Bhutto. They believe in raising emotional slogans and lack a solid plan of action. There is a big political and social vacuum in Sind, but the PPP just is not aware of it. Professor Ghulam Mustafa Shah and other people with bureaucratic mentality are trying to give intellectual leadership to this party. Masood Mehmood and Rao Rashid controlled the PPP when it was in power and the situation is not very different now. Rural population is suffering from many problem. The PPP

has always been successful in getting emotional support from the rural population, but it has never done anything in return except raise slogans like "Bhutto lives." As the result of this neglect many small political groups have started to hurt the PPP. Benazir Bhutto still is not willing to descend down from the [ivory] tower of Bhuttoism. Her supporters dance to exhaustion to the tune of "Bhutto lives" on 4 April, then go to sleep until next year. The 4 April meeting of the PPP at Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto is equivalent to its annual convention. Benazir could not participate in this meeting in the past as she was either in jail or abroad. The government has given full freedom for meetings and expression of opinion and, because of Miss Benazir's presence, party membership from all districts in Sind participated in this meeting. At the time of Fazal Rahu's "Chehlum" [40th day after death], large number of people walked on foot to Rahu's village. The PPP leadership copied a Palejo groups trick. Last year, they had a small girl, Shabnam, walk on foot from Karachi to Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto during Bhutto's death anniversary. This year, people came on bicycles and motorcycles from every district to participate in this march. All this shows that another "martyr" is not acceptable in the rural areas of Sind. There was an exemplary cooperation between the PPP and the government in Larkana, and the police did not interfere in any activity. The police checked the meeting stage at Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto with special equipment at the "request of the PPP." This precaution was carried out after the bomb incident involving Ilama Ihsan Ali Zaheer, leader of Jumiat-e Ahl-e Hadish. Political leaders have developed a feeling of insecurity after the bomb incident in a Lahore meeting. Most of the member of the central committee of the PPP were present there. Benazir had asked for another public meeting in Sakkar before the 4 April meeting. A few days earlier, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, president of the National People's Party, had addressed a large rally in Sakkar. As a political maneuver it was necessary to counter this with speeches by Tikka Khan, Jahangir Badar, Rana Shaukat Mehmood, Professor N.D. Khan, and Malik Hakmeen. They all dismissed the slogan demanding recognition of Muhajirs as the fifth group in Sind and supported Benazir "national" leadership. The PPP is afraid of Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi's party and another powerful group led by Makhdum Khaliq Alzman. The PPP is going through a new historical low in Sind. Makhdum Khaliq Alzman has already started a long tour of Sind. He has openly declared that he considers Benazir Bhutto his leader after God and the Prophet. However, his faith is unrealistic and he is aware of being politically ignored. Benazir Bhutto appears to be ready to use the strategy of using "Sind card." She will not accept the popularity of Makhdum Khaliq Alzman among Sindh's youth. A decision has been made on this issue in Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto and a formal announcement about it will be made soon. Meanwhile, Makhdoom Khaliq Alzman has also decided to fight hard for his political existence. One of his close associates commented in Larkana that Khaliq Alazman has sacrificed a lot for the Bhutto family, but he is not going to start another party like Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi did. We are members of the PPP and it will not be easy to work against us. Everywhere in Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto were the pictures of the late Mr Bhutto, Begum Nasrat Bhutto, and Benazir Bhutto. Hundreds of delegations from Punjab were there. Thousands of women had come from various districts in Punjab under the leadership of Begum Aabida Malik. They displayed Benazir Bhutto's name on their name stickers. A large banner read: The atmosphere caused by the one who was put to death will bring in a new morning.

Various banners carried anti-government slogans. Some banners demanded freeing political prisoners, reinstatement of a democratic government, and support for the MRD. Pictures of Benazir Bhutto were visible everywhere in Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto. Cassettes of the late Mr Bhutto were being played and being listened to. Video films of public rallies held on Benazir Bhutto's return from abroad were being shown. Stalls displayed literature and other publicity items about the PPP. Shah Nawaz Bhutto's photograph with "kalishnikof" was also displayed. The title of his picture read: "Revolutionary Leader." This year again the organizing committee to observe the death anniversary was headed by Begum Ashraf Abbasi and its secretary was Sayyed Deedar Husain. However, Benazir Bhutto herself supervised at the highest level. Arrangements for accomodating various delegations were made. No member of Mumtaz Bhutto's family participated in this celebration. Hundreds of volunteers who worked for the anniversary celebration were issued special cards by the PPP. The crowd was very big and at times all security arrangements failed. Photostat copies of the Bhutto family tree were also being distributed. The family tree showed that the Bhutto family had moved from Punjab's Hissar district to Sind. Mohammad Khan, Fateh Mohammad Khan, Mitthu Khan, and Mohammad Qasim Khan are some of Bhutto family's ancestors. An audio cassette with three songs about Mr Bhutto sung by Yaqub Khan Khaskheli was specially released for this meeting. Women from Punjab wore black mourning clothes. There was a heavy traffic of buses, Suzuki cars, Trollies, trucks and jeeps. Pajero group was also well represented. Benazir Bhutto arrived in a jeep owned by Pajero. She was accompanied by Begum Ashraf Abbasi and General (Retired) Tikka Khan. According to a PPP representative, Mr Tikka Khan is acting As Benazir's body guard. Photographs of Mr Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto were included in the posters issued by the Sind People's Students Federation. Jiey Sind (Long Live Sind) and Jiey Bhutto slogans were printed on both sides of these photographs. The posters demanded constitutional rights for the provinces. Sind People's Party had prepared a three-color poster with pictures of Bhutto, Begum Nasrat Bhutto, and Benazir Bhutto. Banners, posters, and handbills were also distributed by the Sind People's Hari (farmers) Committee, Sind People's Youth Organization, Sind People's Labor Union, and Sind People's Girl Students Federation. All this publicity material praised Bhutto family's services to the nation. Benazir Bhutto was give the title of "Maruvi Malerji" [heralding a battle]. What is more, even American posters were visible in Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto! Excerpts form speeches made by the late Mr Bhutto were also being distributed. Handbill describing the efforts of the MRD were also made available to the public. A pamphlet describing the "treachery" of the central committee of the PPP was also published.

This pamphlet accused the central committee of following its politics in drawing rooms and for Mr Bhutto's hanging. Benazir was dressed in traditional Sindhi clothes. Fields were cleared to make a huge meeting area. This stage according to the organizers was 30 feet long, 20 feet wide and 7 feet high. Mir Hazar Khan Bijrani, Makhdum Khaliq Alzman, Sayyed Qayem Ali Shah, Tikka Khan, Mawraj Khalid, Malik Qasim Khan, Malik Mohammad Qasim, Imanullah Kachki, Parvez Salah, Sardar Ibrahim, Aftab Sherpao, Mumtaz Rathor and other leaders were present on the stage. Makhdum Khaliq Alzman was present with his smile at this death anniversary. He is a strong critic of Benazir Bhutto over her stand on the Afghan policy and the disagreement between him and Miss Bhutto is increasing. The political distance between the two appeared to be greater in

Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto. Close associates of Makhdum Khaliq Alazman still believe that Benazir Bhutto cannot afford to lose the support of Mr Alazman. However, objective political observer think that one of these two leaders will have to bow out of the PPP. Makhdum Khaliq Alazman is an expert in politics and he must have understood on 14 April that things have changed now. Effigies of President Ziaul Haq and other important government officials were also burned at Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto.

While this rally at Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto shows us how strong the PPP is in Sind, it also indicates that the zealous and emotional PPP workers are not aware of the demands of our time. They are giving "superman" status to their leaders. The leadership of PPP is suffering from a lack of agreement in philosophy. Benazir could have used this occasion to inform the PPP workers about present situation in the country, government's policies, goals of the MRD, and other important issues. She, instead, went on raising pro-Bhutto slogans in that emotional atmosphere. Slogans can keep a political party alive, but they cannot provide political stability. Political slogan can give some food for thought, but they cannot help change a political philosophy into actions. Benazir Bhutto does not seem to be ready to accept the new political reality. She is stuck with a group of intellectuals who have been a source of any brand of "intelligence" to various governments at various times. These intellectuals are using the PPP for experiments. Benazir considers these intellectuals as her special advisers. It is possible that she is using this strategy just to get into power. It is getting more and more difficult for her to get power. The PPP is shrinking and Benazir Bhutto is becoming a giant. This bizarre contrast between the party and her personality will adversely influence everyone. She thinks she is safe in this political womb, but the situation in the country, especially in Sind, has changed dramatically because of clashes between several political groups. The organizational structure of the PPP is ready to crumble. The struggle for party leadership in Sind has come to a climax. Slogans of nationalism are being raised in the cities and political groups have started solid work in rural areas. Benazir Bhutto is still hopeful that the grave of late Mr Bhutto will help her through the ballot box. Perhaps, she is right in assuming this. The Big rally at Garhi Khuda Bax Bhutto on 4 April supports this assumption. However, we have to keep in mind that a lot of water has flowed under the Sakkar bridge since Mr Bhutto was in power. The PPP leadership and members must understand the political situation. Otherwise, even the rural areas will stop supporting them. Inactivity in politics is unnatural and the PPP will never succeed in getting into the government by being inactive. Action, new developments, and political changes according to the needs of the nation are essential for the PPP to survive.

7997

CSO: 4656/75

NEED FOR UNITY TO HOLD ALL-PARTIES' CONFERENCE STRESSED

Lahore NAWA-I-WAQT in Urdu 11 Apr 87 p 12

[Report by Yusuf Khan: "Test Time for the MRD"]

[Text] The case of the all parties' conference has become a big one. Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani, president of Jamiat-e Ulema-e Pakistan [JUP], is to be commended for postponing his decision to host this conference. General Maulana Fazal-ul Rehman, secretary general of Jamiat-e Ulema-e Islam [JUI], praised Mr Noorani's action to solve this dispute over the all parties' conference. He said that this will be good for broader interest of the nation and this proposed conference will take place without any further delay. The possibility of nation's prominent politicians sitting together for a common cause does not seem to be distant one now. According to Iqbal Haider, secretary general of Qaumi Muhaz Aarai [National Confrontation Movement], some "hidden hand" is hindering this effort to have politicians work together. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, chairman of the NPP, agreed that the cancellation of all parties' conference has set the democratic forces way back. The longest party coalition in the political history of our country, the MRD, is contacting various political groups for a round table conference through its general secretary, General Malik Mohammad Qasim. So far he has contacted Khursheed Husan Mir and Taj Mohammad Langa of the Awami Jamhoori Party, and Abid Hussain Minto of the Socialist Party. He has also started some preliminary talks with his counterpart in the JUP, Shah Faridul Haq, the senior vice president. Later he said that the MRD does not want to score any points on the problems of all parties conference. "Our goals are common," he added. All politicians tell us that their goals are common, but it is not very difficult to see their differences. Benazir Bhutto is as wary about the all parties conference as are Pir Pagara and Prime Minister Junejo. At least there is some agreement between Mohammad Khan Junejo and Benazir Bhutto! However, Benazir Bhutto has already started attacking the Junejo government. It is possible that she is doing that so the British news media could make some trouble for the leader of the Muslim League during his planned visit to the United Kingdom.

Despite the agreement on having elections based on the 1973 constitution, there are serious disagreements among politicians and political parties over the way the issue of how this demand should be made. An indication of this disagreement was evident in a statement issued by Sayyed Zia Abbas, central figure in the NPP [National People's Party]. His disagreement was clearly

stated and appeared to support NDP's Sardar Sher Baz Mazari's prediction that if political parties and leaders do not agree there will no more elections much less in 1990. This meeting was almost like a mini all parties conference since representatives of all parties, except the ruling Muslim League, were present. This joint meeting gave us an idea of the agenda for the all parties's conference when it is held. Both Maulana Fazal-ul Rehman of JUI and Shah Faridul Haq of JUP agree that there should be a meeting of all parties to demand ouster of President Ziaul Haq and holding new elections. However, they cannot agree on the list of parties that should be invited to join this conference. The most disputed issue is whether Jamaat-e Islami and the Muslim League should be invited or not. Should parties such as Tehriq-e Istiqlal, National Democratic Party [NDP], and National People's Party [NPP] that are not members of the MRD be invited if the MRD acts as the host? This is another burning question in the minds of the sponsors. Maulana Fazal-ul Rehman said that the idea of inviting these parties is equivalent of sabotaging the concept of the MRD. Shah Farid-ul Haq said that the JI talks about holding elections in 1990 and will not cooperate if immediate elections are demanded. Iqbal Haider of the Qaumi Muhaz Azadi said that the question of inviting JI and the Muslim League just does not arise. When Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi of the NPP said that they should discuss this issue, Maulana Fazal-ul Rehman replied that the issue was moot. The politicians discussed for while whether the JI is a political party worth inviting or not since only prominent parties were being considered for participation in the all parties' conference. Professor Ghafur Ahmad, vice president of JI, who is used to hearing criticism of his party in Karachi's political circles listened quietly to criticism of his party. Finally, he requested the present political leaders to take a liberal view of the whole affair. He said that it would be fine if the JI is not invited. Leaders of other parties agreed on it. We are praying that these politicians do not become a laughing stock of the world. People who gave us martial law have become notorious, but these politicians are no less than they!

Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi said that all political parties must work together to get rid of Ziaul Haq and company. He added that Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani had put his faith in him over the issue of all parties' conference. He (Jatoi) did not plan to use this conference to start a new party to establish his power base.

Shah Farid-ul Haq expressed his concern that everything will be delayed if organization of the all parties's conference is given to Malik Qasim, secretary general of the MRD. The ball now is in the MRD's court since the JUP has agreed to back out of its offer to host the conference until the MRD makes a decision. It should not take much time for a coalition of several parties to make a decision on this issue. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, however, feels that this issue should not be pushed too fast. The country will benefit from this cooperation among the political parties. Maulana Fazal-ul Rehman said that it was our misfortune that the country lacked unity of thought and purpose at national level. He added that it was the duty of political parties to foster this unity. People trust patriotic organizations and they do not like groups harboring separatist sentiments. They want to save the federated Pakistan and a delay in united political actions will help the forces working against the country.

According to a retired politician the problem with Pakistan's political parties is that they are not getting popular support for the demand to ouster President Zia and the present government. People were charmed and won over by Bhutto's slogan about food, clothes, and a roof in 1970 and by the promise of God's government by the Qaumi Ittehad in 1977. People just do not understand the demand for holding elections according to the 1973 constitution. General Zia has been in power for 10 years. Now Sardar Sher Baz Mazari, president of the NDP, believes that as long as political parties do not include labor, students, and other economically deprived groups in their programs, their dream for a democratic rule will not be realized. The opposition parties should not accept the referendum of 1984 which made Zia president until 1990. However, we just cannot ignore the fact that people did elect this government in the February 1985 elections. An overwhelming 53.29 percent of voters cast their votes in those elections held on non-party basis. Junejo's civilian government which came in power in March 1985 is 2 years old now. Some parties are waiting for the term of this government to expire and are working on their program and trying to get people's support. Other parties are fighting among themselves as is clear from the present situation.

Politicians have been trying to unite on one platform since 5 July 1977. The MRD was established in February 1981 for this purpose, but without any concrete results. JUP's efforts to hold a round table conference in 1982 was sabotaged by Pir Pagara and the government. Nineteen eighty three was the year of the MRD movement, 1984 was the year of the referendum, the elections were held in 1985, and 1986 saw the return of Benazir Bhutto. We are entering the mid-point of 1987 now. Will this year bring us an all parties' conference? If not, then the decade between 5 July 1977 and 5 July 1987 will pass without a round table conference. This will be a new record for the politicians!

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PUNJABI-PAKHTOON ALLIANCE WARNS OF TENSION IN KARACHI

Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 19 Apr 87 pp 1, 8

[Article by Kamran Khan]

[Text]

KARACHI, April 18: Persisting ethnic tension in Sind has grown further in dangerous dimensions as the recently formed Punjabi-Pakhtoon Ittehad vowed to offer armed resistance to the Sind Government if it took any action to evict hundreds of Pakhtoon families from the under construction houses of Surjani Town. They had moved to the town after being dislodged in the 'Operation Cleanup' in the biggest drug and gun market of Sohrab Goth just outside Karachi in December last year.

In a big rally during which dozens of persons wielded Keshmiri-kovs, revolvers, pistols and a large quantity of ammunition, the leaders of PPI made a direct request to the Corps Commander, Karachi not to provide troops to the Sind Government in any of its action against the occupants of Surjani Town. The request to the army commander from the Punjabi-Pakhtoon Ittehad coincides with a request from the Sind Government to the local army commanders that it may require some of their troops in its eviction operation against the illegal occupants of the Surjani Town.

The Surjani Town controversy had arisen when thousands of houses were demolished at the Sohrab Goth during the 'Operation Cleanup'. Several hundreds of those who were rendered homeless as a result of the operation had refused to accept the provincial government offer for residential plots and instead had moved to the Surjani Town where a private construction company was building low cost houses. The entire scheme had been booked in advance by the

persons mainly from the middle income group of Karachi. The illegal occupation of the Surjani had resulted from the failure of the police, the then SSP (West) and the Deputy Commissioner for the Karachi West to prevent the evictees from Sohrab Goth from settling there.

Since December the provincial administration had made frequent attempts to convince the Pakhtoon occupants of the Surjani Town to vacate the houses. Twice during these attempts the occupants exchanged fire with the police and on one occasion they had a gunfire exchange with the nearby Mohajir inhabitants. Police officials here have already reported to the Sind Chief Minister Syed Ghous Ali Shah that the occupants of Surjani Town are armed to teeth.

These occupants gained further strength as the new ethnic group called Punjabi-Pakhtoon Ittehad appeared on the scene. The principal demand of the group, besides seeking of the Sind Chief Minister is to get the occupants of Surjani Town permanently settled in the houses which they have occupied.

In the recent law and order meeting the Chief Minister made it clear that eviction of illegal occupants from the Surjani Town is the principal objective of his administration. The police and the district administration authorities have been ordered to prepare a contingency plan to launch a bloodless operation. "We want to use minimum possible force", said a senior police official in Karachi. He confirmed "the use of troops is under active consideration."

In its proposed operation in the Surjani Town the administration had unequivocal support from the strong Mohajir Qasmi Movement. The MQM support and the opposition from the PPI have made the job more complicated for the law-enforcing agencies here.

While the tension between the two ethnic groups is multiplying rapidly, the strong police force here is yet to make any success against the arms keepers of any of the two groups. Despite stern orders from the Chief Minister the police could not nab any of the dozens who wielded arms and fired countless rounds during the PPI's public meeting at the Pakhtoon-dominated Banaras Chowk late Friday evening. During the same meeting the PPI leaders had the participants swear that they would lay down their lives in case of government action against Surjani Town.

The high profile presence of the armed Punjabi youth was significant during the meeting. These youth belong to the Punjabi Students Association and Punjabi

Medicos--the two Punjabi student organisations who lost three of their most active leaders during the last few weeks in Karachi. Two of them had died in police firing while Ishtiaq Choudhry, president of PMO, Sind Medical College died in revenge shooting by the activists of IJT.

The police, however, maintained that all the three students Ishtiaq Choudhry, Salim Choudhry and Wiqas alais Vicky, were wanted in murder and robbery cases and their names had been mentioned in the first information reports recorded several months back.

The Punjabi students, who now back the PPI, have described the three late students as martyrs and alleged that Sind administration led by the Chief Minister has failed to provide protection to the people from other provinces, living in Sind. Some students of Punjabi Students Association set ablaze a government bus in Karachi to protest against the shooting of one of its leaders in Karachi on Wednesday.

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GOVERNMENT TO GIVE RELIEF TO MARTIAL LAW CONVICTS

Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 19 Apr 87 p 1

[Article by Ashraf Hashmi]

[Text]

ISLAMABAD, April 18: The three-member sub-committee of the Constitution Review Committee set up by the Prime Minister to examine the amendments made in the 1973 Constitution through the Revival of the Constitution Order is said to have procured all the relevant information about the prisoners convicted under Martial Law and currently serving various terms in different jails in all the four provinces of the country.

Headed by Justice and Interior Minister Wasim Sajjad, the sub-committee consists of Senator Hassan A. Sheikh and Elahi Bux Soomro. In its recent meeting at Lahore it thoroughly reviewed the information supplied by all the four provincial governments and sorted out the cases of those who had been punished only for taking part in political activities during the Martial Law days.

The Chairman of the Committee, Wasim Sajjad, told The Muslim that the proposed review would only be possible in cases relating to the persons convicted for political activities. No relief for the time being would be possible for those convicted for serious moral offences like murder, rape, and kidnapping as the majority of these cases were sent to Martial Law Courts on the demand of the people. He said the question of Martial Law convicts was also

raised during his recent meetings with the representatives of the Amnesty International. The Amnesty was told that the Government was seriously considering providing relief to all those people who had been convicted for raising their voice against the continuation of Martial Law. But the same concession would not be available to those convicted for moral offences of a serious nature.

The Amnesty International also raised the question pertaining to the inhumane conditions prevailing in Pakistani jails and was accordingly assured that the Government of Pakistan has already constituted a jail reforms committee, the report of which is awaited. Appropriate measures to improve these conditions would be taken after the committee submits its recommendations to the Government. The Amnesty had also objected to a number of statutory laws which it said gave arbitrary powers to the Government to encroach upon the fundamental rights of the people. The objective conditions prevailing in the country and the tense situation on its borders will have to be taken into account in relation to these laws. Such laws, the Amnesty was told, were necessary to deal with the situation of internal

and external subversion. However, the Amnesty was informed that the Government has already constituted a Law Reforms Committee of the National Assembly to examine all such laws and regulations.

Talking about the Martial Law convicts of a political nature the Minister told this correspondent that the matter was being examined on priority basis. Necessary information has already been compiled and the three-member sub-committee was in the process of finalising its recommendations. These recommendations would soon be submitted to the Prime Minister for a final decision in the Cabinet. He said he was not sure about the modalities of providing the proposed relief to these prisoners. It would be decided in the light of the recommendations; he could not say whether the objective could be achieved by issuing some executive order or a proper legislation would be required.

When asked about the progress of the main Committee towards the revival of the 1973 Constitution by undoing the amendments made by RCO, the Minister said that the issue was of a very complex nature and needed more time for detailed consideration.

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REPORT DESCRIBES SALE, USE OF VODKA IN PESHAWAR

Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 17 Apr 87 p 8

[Article by Rahimullah Yusufzai]

[Text]

PESHAWAR, April 16: Like numerous other Soviet products which have found their way into Pakistani markets in the wake of the Afghanistan crisis, Vodka has sprung from anonymity to become a familiar name. The transparently white, almost colourless, Russian Vodka has in fact surged far ahead of whisky sales in NWFP, especially in Peshawar, due to its competitive prices and peculiar taste.

A survey conducted by this correspondent showed that there are at least 15 shops selling Vodka along with whiskies and wines in Jamrud in Khyber Agency and about 50 sellers in Peshawar who clandestinely supply the forbidden Russian spirit. Those addicted to drinking have started patronising Vodka as well because it is both cheap and fashionable, but a significant number of Vodka-addicts did not drink before. Vodka has caught on fast ever since its introduction in NWFP from across the Durand Line in the aftermath of the Saur Revolution in Afghanistan in April 1978.

Vodka is defined as alcoholic spirit made especially in Russia, but also in Poland and certain other countries, by distillation of rye, etc. Rye is a North European cereal used for bread in northern countries and for fodder elsewhere, and whisky distilled from it is called rye-whisky. Part of the vast family of whiskies, Vodka made an inauspicious start in the Pakistani market as drinkers tried its taste and weighed their pockets. But it was not long before it outstripped sales of other whiskies, mostly Scotch. Greater demand has pushed up its rates but the increase is not astronomical.

Stolichnaya, simply called Stoll by its Western or American connoisseurs, is the familiar brand of Russian Vodka now easily available in Peshawar. Stickers on the bottle proclaim that it is genuine Russian Vodka with 100 per cent grain neutral spirit. It is distilled and bottled in the USSR for V/O Moscow. Instructions on the bottle say that it should be cooled before drinking.

Stolichnaya is available in three sizes, including 50 centilitres, 75 centilitres, and 100 centilitres (one litre). The one litre magnum size is most often in short supply while the 75-centilitre bottle is the most sought after. Prices fluctuate depending on the supplies from Afghanistan, which are interrupted when the scene of war shifts to the border areas and the highways and smuggling routes are blocked. Peaceful conditions in parts of Afghanistan and in the tribal belt of Pakistan help sustain a steady flow of Vodka supplies to keep prices within the familiar limit.

In Jamrud, a non-descript town located at the mouth of the Khyber Pass 15 kilometres from Peshawar, a bottle of 50-centilitre Vodka sold in wholesale is priced at Rs. 100 while the 75-centilitre costs Rs. 150. The 100-centilitre bottle has a price ranging from Rs. 200 and above. When smuggled across the tribal territory along with a host of other foreign goods to the Frontier metropolis, its prices shoot up by an average of Rs. 50 per bottle. The magnum-size Vodka bottle may be had for a price ranging from Rs. 250 to Rs. 350, depending upon the bargaining skills of the buyer and the season, day and time of the pur-

chase. Rates tend to differ even in Peshawar cantonment and city.

Vodka was available much cheaper when it first arrived on the Pakistani market and those suffering from Russophobia argue that these were 'propaganda prices' destined to lure the people. In fact, Soviet goods ranging from cloth to soaps to jams and electric gadgets which have flooded local markets are very competitively priced attracting the middle class and lower middle class striving to live in comfort with their modest means. Buying Russian merchandise is no longer a taboo, more so for those who find their prices affordable and their quality reasonable.

The December 1985 "Operation X-ray" against the Afridi chieftain Malik Wali Khan Kukikhel and his tribal supporters in Khyber Agency led to an upward trend in Vodka prices but these have since stabilised. The 50-centilitre Vodka bottle was sold for Rs. 60 to 70 prior to the government action in which a large number of houses of tribesmen were bulldozed. The 75-centilitre bottle cost about Rs. 120 and the magnum size less than Rs.200.

A shopkeeper selling Vodka in Jamrud informed that 5,000 litres of the Russian drink is on an average sold in a month by six shops operating in the famous Teddy Bazaar. He said Vodka is sold much more than other whiskies and its popularity and acceptance was growing. He felt Vodka has caught on because it costs one-third of the price of the commonest Scotch whiskies and also due to its mild intoxication.

A retailer surreptitiously running a liquor business in Peshawar Saddar, who was prevailed upon after much persuasion and on the promise of anonymity to tell

something about his Vodka sales, informed that he sold about 15 bottles daily. He said sales were on the higher side on Fridays and holidays. Vodka sales shoot up in winter when those fond of drinking prefer it to warm up their spirits in the cold. He added that those buying Vodka include professionals like engineers, doctors, teachers and men of letters. Shopkeepers, businessmen and students also buy Vodka but members of the intelligentsia outdo the rest. He said female purchasers make up 5 to 10 per cent of the total number of buyers.

Asked as to why he preferred Vodka to other whiskies, a drinker said it is only mildly intoxicating and overdrinking was not much of a problem. He remarked that Vodka is perhaps the only 'whisky' which is drunk during daytime. "There are no hangovers and a person finds himself fresh and fit in the morning after a drinking bout at night. There is no headache or vomiting as after-effects. Vodka tastes bitter but the bitterness is less than in other whiskies and wines," explained the young addict somewhat exaggeratedly. He added: "I feel fine after taking Vodka. My chest and stomach is alright after drinking Vodka but I suffer with whiskies and wines".

Vodka is a necessary item in drinking parties in Peshawar these days, the ban on liquor notwithstanding. It is much sought, after and popular, especially with the young. Vodka is nicknamed 'Gorbachev' in close circles of drinkers. "We mean no disrespect to Soviet leader Mr. Gorbachev. Perhaps it is a tribute to the leader of a country which has produced such an excellent drink," exclaimed a Vodka-addict as he recovered from a drinking bout.

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BRIEFS

OPPOSITION TO TIRAH ROAD--Peshawar, April 18--The Afridi tribal 'Lashkar' which managed to reach Jamrud from Bara Tehsil through a government security network yesterday met there Saturday and resolved to oppose construction of the Tirah Road and new scouts posts in Khyber Agency. The lashkar tribesmen were today the guests of certain Jamrud tribal elders including Safeel Khan, who lives in Ghundi and is notorious for car-lifting and kidnapping. Meanwhile, it is learnt that pro-government Maliks and tribesmen would hold a 'jirga' in Jamrud tomorrow to formulate their reaction to the arrival of the 'lashkar' in their tehsil. [Text] [Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 19 Apr 87 p 1] /9317

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